

THE WORLD WITHIN THE MIND

THE WORLD
WITHIN
THE MIND
(YOGA-VASISHTHA)

*Extracts from the Discourses of the Sage
Vasishtha to his pupil, Prince Rama,
translated from the Sanskrit of Valmiki.*

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*Dedicated to Mrs. Mary Mitchison, O.B.E.
with respect and gratitude.*

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INTRODUCTION

THE work called *Yoga-Vasishtha*, known also as the *Maharamayana*, consisting of thirty-two thousand verses, is attributed to the Sage Valmiki, the first poet to write in the Sanskrit language as we know it to-day. Indeed, Valmiki may still claim to be the greatest Sanskrit poet, and *Yoga Vasishtha* is full of poetry of the highest order.

This classic was known in its present form before the time of the Sage Gaudapada, who flourished in the 2nd century B.C., and who was the *Guru* of the *Guru* of the great Shankaracharya, the most brilliant philosopher in the Vedanta tradition. Swami Vidyananya, another glorious star in the firmament of Eastern philosophy, quotes over a hundred verses from *Yoga Vasishtha* in his well-known work *Jivan-Mukti-Viveka*, written long before Shakespeare was born.

Yoga Vasishtha has been a favourite of the Yogis and monks of the Himalayan retreats, and also of the busy kings and statesmen of India. They believed that he who studies it carefully and lives its teachings, rises above the limitations of matter and, feeling everlasting bliss in his own being, shares his spiritual exaltation with his fellow-men through benevolence and true philanthropy.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional yogic teachings, as understood and practised by the highest authorities on spiritual learning in the East, are summarised in the extracts which have been selected for this volume.

THE FIRST DISCOURSE

As the holy Sage Vasishtha entered the royal assembly at six o'clock in the morning, clad in a yellow robe, his figure slightly bent, the king and his ministers arose, and all standing, cried ; " *Om Namo Narayanaya*,¹ *Mahatma*² ! "

The holy *Rishi*³ gave them his blessings, and occupying the high seat, spoke thus, addressing Prince Rama :

" In whatever company he finds himself, while performing the duties of life, the wise man yet watches the movements of his mind. It should not be engaged in the cares of the world, nor employed in thoughts relating to the things of this life. The mind must not be allowed to roam over the extensive field of outer enjoyments, nor to dwell on the objects and actions of the senses.

Let it rest in the *buddhi*⁴ alone, and taste no joy except that of self-delight. The wise man remains wholly centred in himself, and his

¹ *Om Namo Narayanaya* : Om. Salutations to God, the Lord of all.

² *Mahatma* : " Great-souled one."

³ *Rishi* : A god-realised sage : a perfected soul ; one who has attained to the knowledge of his own divinity and the identity of the soul with God.

⁴ *Buddhi* : The discriminative faculty, or intuitive reason. It is the higher aspect of intelligence in contradistinction to the lower mind (*manas*).

THE WORLD WITHIN THE MIND

even-mindedness is comparable to the steadiness of a Himalayan peak, immovable at all times and seasons. This state of mind comes to maturity in the course of time, having been acquired by constant practice of *Yoga*¹ and the service of the Teacher.

Then the Yogi is freed from both sorrow and fear, and passes beyond the errors and troubles of the world: nor is he afraid of ever falling from this state. He who has thus attained, laughs to scorn and spurns the whirling orb of the earth, even as one, sitting on a high hill, smiles at the objects lying below him.

O Rama, the Masters of *Adhyatma*² *Yoga* hold that one of the easiest ways of attaining to this state is supreme devotion to God and the *Yoga*.

You, O Rama, have known the truth—that God presides over the world—and you have understood divine Nature in all its threefold state.³ As in the ocean you see nothing but

¹ *Yoga*: Here means a path of discipleship (knowledge or illumination being its goal) under the guidance of a traditional Teacher. The four aspects of this path of *Yoga* are:

- (i) A study of its spiritual philosophy, accompanied by self-examination and self-restraint.
- (ii.) Meditation practices traditionally received.
- (iii.) The service of the Spiritual Teacher.
- (iv.) A life of religious conduct (*dharma*) lived consciously in probity, virtue, benevolence and humility—and the daily practice of harmlessness towards all living beings.

A follower of this path is called a *yogi* (fern. *yogini*).

² *Adhyatma Yoga*: Literally: 'The *Yoga* pertaining to the Self.' The metaphysical basis of this *Yoga* is non-dualistic (*a-dvaita*) and its greatest exponent and commentator was Shri Shankaracharya who taught twenty-two centuries ago, in India.

³ *Threefold state*: Nature (*Prakriti*) is said to be entirely made up of three basic qualities (*gunas*) which are *sattva* (light, harmony), *rajas* (passion, activity) and *tamas* (darkness, inertia).

a vast body of water, so in the domain of the universe, you find naught save the one universal Lord.

As the perception of a flower is accompanied by perception of its perfume, so the knowledge of *Atman*¹ is inseparable from knowledge of the mind. As the all-pervading sky is only partially seen in a mirror, so the omnipresent *Atman* is only partially seen in the mirror of the mind.

The supreme Spirit, unlimited by time and space, of His own will and by the power of His omnipotence, takes upon Himself the limited forms of time and space. Know that the world, although appearing as substantial, has nothing substantial in it: it is a void, being merely an appearance created by the images and vagaries of the mind. Know the world to be an enchanted scene, presented by the magic of *maya*.²

All this world is *Brahman*.³ What else is there beside Him? Whence did it come? Where is it situated? The world is the creation of error,

¹ *Atman*: The real Self; the immortal and immutable Spirit of man.

² *Maya*: The creative, self-conditioning Power of the Lord Omniscient and Omnipresent; the unreal medium through which the Supreme Spirit (*Brahman*) manifests Himself. It has no existence independent of God, and can therefore neither be said to be absolutely existent nor non-existent. It is the divine Power which makes the spiritual reality appear as the phenomenal world.

³ *Brahman*: The Absolute, so termed because there is nothing in the universe, past, present or future, to which It is related. The word means "Majesty." *Brahman* is the Eternal, the unconditioned and Supreme Reality, *secondless (advaita)*, without attributes, actionless and unapproachable either by speech or the mind. In the *Avadhut Gita* it is said: "Brahman is neither the Knower nor the Known; the Scriptures (*Vedas*) cannot establish It: this Consciousness Absolute words cannot describe; the mind is lost in its Majesty. How can I describe to thee this Eternal?"

and the idol of fools. Shun your fond desire and thoughts of it, O Rama, O beloved son, and think of your ever-luminous *Atman*."

Rama reflected upon the words of his holy Teacher.

"What means this wandering of ours in the world," he thought, "and why is it that all these men and animals are compelled to make their entrances and exits on the stage of this evanescent theatre of life? What is the nature of our mind and how is it to be governed? What is this *Maya* of the universe? What is its origin and how may it be avoided? How does it bind the soul¹ and what benefit or disadvantage is there in ridding oneself of this illusion? What does the *Muni*² say with regard to the methods of curbing the appetites of the mind, and the effect of doing so? What does he say about the tranquillity of the spirit?"

It is our own hearts and minds that tend to stretch out the phenomenal world before us, and our very souls make a reality of this unreal existence. All these things are linked together in our minds, and they are weakened by the weakening of our mental appetites. The slender light of reason is overshadowed by the dark clouds of passions and appetites. How am I then to distinguish the right from the wrong?

The mind leads us to spiritual knowledge on the one hand, and seduces us to worldliness

¹ Soul: (*Jiva*): The individualised or conditioned consciousness

² *Muni*: A sage.

on the other. When will my anxieties be completely at rest? When will my cares come to an end? When will my soul have its holiness? When will my fancy end its flight and concentrate on the inward Truth? When will my mind be absorbed into the supreme Spirit, like a turbulent wave subsiding on the breast of the quiet sea? When will the light of reason dispel this dark cloud of ignorance that envelops my divine Essence under the veil of this miserable form?

Let me reflect upon the sayings of the holy Sage, and then upon the conduct of one who longs for liberation.¹ Let me practise virtue: let me attend *Sat-Sangs*² with a pure mind, and let me serve my Teacher. Let me be deaf to all that is not godly: let me live in prayer and in the practice of meditation."

¹ *Liberation (Moksha)* from the bondage of mortal existence with all its sufferings and limitations, through the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. It is the destruction of ignorance (*avidya*) which brings the yogi final release (*moksha*) from the recurring cycle of birth and death, the attainment of true Self-knowledge.

² *Sat-Sangs*: A traditional assembly of yogis presided over by a traditional Teacher at which the spiritual truth is taught and meditated upon.

THE SECOND DISCOURSE

WHEN music announced another dawn, Rama, with his royal father and brothers, again came to the assembly.

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama-ji, know this world to be an unremitting illusion, upheld by men of *passionate* or *dull* natures¹: it is they who support this unreal fabric, as pillars bear up a building.

Let the intelligent look into the phenomena of the world and, by observing what is real and what is unreal in it, attach themselves only to the reality.

It is the mind that creates the world and stretches it out in its own imagination. The best way to guard the mind from delusion is, first of all, a knowledge of the elements of this holy philosophy: next, the exercise of dispassion, and then the society of the good which leads the mind towards purity.

The mind which is filled with holiness and humility, should have recourse to teachers of

¹ *Passionate or dull natures* : The mind and physical body, like the rest of creation, partake of the three constituent qualities of Nature (*Prakriti*). The nature of each man's 'personality' is therefore predominantly governed by one of these three qualities (*gunas*), either purity and benevolence (*sattva*), passion-struggle (*rajas*), or sloth and ignorance (*tamas*).

Yoga, blessed by us, and learned in philosophy. Through the instructions of the teachers, the mind comes to perceive by its own cogitations, the presence of God within itself: and it sees the universe spread out before it like the bright rays of the moon.

The divine Spirit is imperishable and after it is once known to the human soul, not even a grain of error can remain.

O ye men, unacquainted with the divine Spirit, *Brahman*, you bear your souls for misery alone: but, knowing *Brahman*, you become entitled to eternal happiness and tranquillity.

O Rama-ji, know the Spirit to be as unsullied by its outer covering of the body as the sky is unsoiled by clouds of dust. All the extensive phenomena of the world which we behold about us, are as the waves of the boundless ocean of the divine Spirit.

By meditating on the supreme Spirit¹ in yourself, and by contemplating Him as the light of your pure *buddhi*, you will be engulfed in the glory of *Brahman*.

Be tolerant, composed and even-minded: remain tranquil, taciturn and meek in your mind, and be as a rich jewel shining with your internal light. Thus you will be freed from the feverish vexations of this worldly life.

Be loosened from the rut of your desires,

¹ *Supreme Spirit*: It should be noted that *Atman*, the eternal principle or Self of man, and *Brahman*, pure Being, the Absolute-Unconditioned are in reality one and the same: difference between them is mistakenly imagined by the individualised soul (*jiva*) on account of the action of nescience (*avidya*).

and wipe the unguent of delusive affection from your eyes. Let your soul rest satisfied in your *Atman* and be freed from the distracting anxieties of this world.

Knowing the world to be unreal, no wise man is deceived by its ever-changing scenes.

It is the spiritual teacher who awakens the dull and sleeping mind by his right reasoning, and then instils into it the word of truth.

First, by diligent attendance upon the good and compassionate *gurus*,¹ and then by the help of reasoning, pure-minded men come to the light of Truth, and perceive the divine light shining in their souls. They become what I am, O Rama-ji."

RAMA ASKED :

"Tell me, O high-minded Sage, how could creation proceed from the supreme *Brahman*, whom you represent as motionless in the void ? "

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

"O Prince, such is the nature of *Brahman* that all power flows incessantly from Him : wherefore every power is said to reside in Him. In Him is entity and non-entity : in Him also is unity, duality, and plurality, and the beginning and end of all things."

¹ *Guru* : A traditional Teacher or Master of Yoga-

RAMA SAID :

"Revered Sir, your discourse is very abstruse, and I cannot understand the meaning of what you say. Anything which is produced from something is invariably of the same nature as its producer : light is produced from light, corn from corn, and man is born of man. Therefore, that which is created by the immutable Spirit must itself be unchangeable and spiritual in nature. Besides, the intelligent Spirit of God is pure and immaculate, whilst all creation is impure and of gross matter."

On hearing these words, the great Sage said :

"Rama-ji, *Brahman* is all purity and there is no impurity in Him : the waves moving on the surface may be foul, but they do not soil the waters of the deep."

RAMA REJOINED :

"Sir, *Brahman* is devoid of sorrow, while the world is full of sorrow. I cannot, therefore, understand you, when you say that *this* is the offspring of *that*."

The great Sage Vasishtha remained silent at these words of Rama. He pondered within himself in the following manner :

It is no fault of the educated if they are doubtful of something until it is explained to them to their satisfaction, as in the case of Prince Rama. But the half-educated are not fit to receive spiritual instruction, because their view of the visible world, which is concerned

only with immediate objects, proves the cause of their ruin.

He who has come to behold the transcendental light, and has a clear insight into spiritual truths, feels no desire for sensual enjoyments; in the course of time he comes to the conclusion that *Brahman* is all in all.

The disciple is to be first prepared and purified through meditation, devotion and the service of the *Yoga*, and by the daily practice of tranquillity and self-control, and is then slowly initiated into the conviction *Kham Brahman*.¹

VASISHTHA THEN SAID :

"I will tell you, O Rama, at the conclusion of these discourses, whether the dross of gross bodies is attributable to *Brahman* or not. For the present, know that *Brahman* is almighty, all-pervading and is Himself all, in the same sense as magicians produce many things in the sight of men by various practices, which are unreal appearances.

Whatever happens, in any form or at any time or place, is but a variation of the One Self-existent Reality. Surely then, O Rama, you should but wonder at any change in time and place which is full of the spirit of God and exhibits the endless aspect of the Infinite.

The mind of one who sees God in all and is firm in equanimity, has no cause to fluctuate

¹ *Kham Brahman* : "All is God " (for all difference, all creation, is phenomenal only and not real).

at any change in nature, or vicissitude of fortune. The Lord manifests the powers seated within Himself, as the sea manifests the waves within itself.

The mind that witnesses the spiritual truths and stands in unsurpassed equanimity, undepressed by external accidents, comes to see that the light of birth is within itself.

There being the lamp, there is its light also ; and the sun shining, brings the day with him ; where there is the flower, there is its perfume too ; so, where there is the living Spirit, there is the knowledge of the world in it.

The world appearing around it is as the light of *Atman*. The minds of men are endowed with this knowledge at their very birth. Then, growing by degrees, they spread themselves out in the course of time in the form of this spacious forest of the world.

Know, O Rama-ji, that although it is commonly said, in speaking of it 'All this is made by, or comes from, God,' it is not really so in the spiritual sense. No change or partition and no relation of space or time bear any reference to the Supreme, Who is immutable, infinite and eternal ; nor is there any appearance or disappearance of Him.

The mind, by reason of its birth from Him, is possessed of both the power and intelligence of His intellect, and by intense application is enabled to accomplish its intended purpose.

To say that one flame of a fire is the product of another is quibbling and there is no truth in

the assertion. It is not a product, but the very thing.

That one is the producer of another is also a fallacy, because the one *Brahman*, being infinite, could produce no thing other than Himself.

Brahman is the intellect (*buddhi*). *Brahman* is the mind (*manas*). He is intelligence (*chit*). The whole universe is *Brahman*, yet He is beyond all this. In reality the world is a non-entity for all is *Brahman* alone.

Beyond the truth of the existence of *Brahman*, nothing can be proved as absolutely certain : and so the holy *Shruti*¹ has declared : ' Verily, all is *Brahman*.'

I will dwell fully on this matter, O Rama, in my last discourses ; your mind has to accomplish more before you can understand it.

As one weapon is foiled by another and one form of dirt can be removed by another², as one poison is destroyed by another, so the destruction of error brings joy to the mind.

The existence of the world verily depends on the existence of the supreme *Brahman* ; know this and do not question how or whence it came into existence.

¹ *Shruti* : Literally, " That which is revealed." The *Vedas* and other authoritative Scriptures, in which are contained the spiritual Truths revealed to the seers of old, are collectively known as *Shruti*.

² One form of dirt can be removed by another : Reference is perhaps made to the case of the *Kalaka* nut, an illustration which is quoted by the great philosopher, *Shri Shankaracharya*. One of its seeds, on being rubbed upon the inside of a water jar, has the power of precipitating all the particles of mud and dust to the bottom, and of thus clearing the water.

Conquer your desires, O Rama, and practise renunciation and detachment. Serve all living beings: listen to the teachings and be single-minded.

Do not be like those who, entrapped in the hundredfold snare of false desires and converted into the manifold forms of their wishes, pass from one body to another, from incarnation to incarnation, as birds fly from one tree to alight on another.

Try to relinquish all earthly desires, O Rama, and devote your heart to the holy *Yoga*."

THE THIRD DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA CONTINUED :

" You must consider all things by the light of the *Shastras*,¹ and dive into their true meaning ; you will also derive benefit from the discourses of your Teacher, by pondering them in your mind, and by your constant practice of ignoring the visible, until you come to know the invisible One.

You can attain to this holy state by dispassion, by your acquaintance with the *Shastras* and their meaning, and by hearing the lectures of the spiritual teachers, as well as by your own conviction that you can achieve it."

RAMA SAID :

" Holy teacher, you are the sun of the day of spiritual Knowledge, and a blazing fire in the night of my doubts ; you are the cooling moon to the heat of my ignorance ! Be good enough to explain to me which of the two, the devotee who lives in society or he who lives in solitude, has the greater merit."

HOLY VASISHTHA REPLIED :

" Both of these are happy souls. as long as they enjoy calmness within themselves.

¹ *Shastras* : The Hindu Scriptures.

He who views the properties and qualities of things as quite distinct from the Spirit, enjoys a calm tranquillity within himself which is called *samadhi*.¹

The man of enlightened mind who is active in the world and the illumined sage who sits in his hermitage, are both alike in their spiritual calm, and have undoubtedly reached the state of blessedness.

It is the activity or the inactivity of the mind which is the sole cause of the restlessness or tranquillity of men. Thickly-gathering desires serve to fill the mind with the vanity of their nature, which is the cause of all its woes : therefore, try to weaken your worldly senses at all times.

When the mind is tranquil as a result of its freedom from fears, griefs and desires, and the soul is set at rest, this state is called *samadhi*.

The homes of householders who have well-governed minds and have banished their sense of egoism are as good as solitary forests, cool caves or peaceful woods, O Rama-ji.

Men of pacified mind view the bright and beautiful buildings of cities in the same dispassionate light as they behold the trees of a forest. He who, in his inmost Spirit, sees the world in God, is verily the Lord of mankind !

The world is all calm to the Yogis of controlled mind ; it is the divine Soul which

¹ *Samadhi* : The mental state which accompanies spiritual enlightenment, which can be acquired through the long practice of meditation and *Yoga*, and the freeing of the intellect from all its gross associations and impurities.

manifests itself in the form of the ego and of the world also.

He who has obtained external and internal tranquillity by the practice of *Yoga*, virtue and service of the Teacher, and who views the world as inseparable from God—he enjoys *samadhi* everywhere; but he who perceives differences and separates his ego from others¹—is forever tossed about as by the rolling waves of the sea.

He who performs his duty with his organs of action, but has fixed his mind in internal meditation, and who is unmoved by joy or grief—he is called the dispassionate *Yogi*.

He who looks calmly on the course of the world as it passes or presents itself before him, and sits smiling at its vicissitudes, that man is called the dispassionate *Yogi*.

One possessed of such spiritual dispassion and equanimity attains the highest perfection; and is quite unconcerned as to his external rise or fall, his life or death.

He is unconcerned whether he lives amidst luxuries in his home, or retired from society and observing silence—it is all one to him.

¹ *Separates his ego*: The meaning is that the separative and erroneous conception of 'I' and 'thou' must be rooted out of consciousness by the *yogi*. Another Teacher has clearly defined this essential teaching thus: "This doctrine of the complete unity within, when brought home to the *yogi*, takes away from him completely all immoral actions and all immoral thoughts. The thief steals from another because he thinks he is he and the one who is robbed is another—that there are two people—but we never hear of the right hand stealing from the left hand!"

"If, in a community, people did but realize their oneness with each other, not only would they not steal from each other, but the sufferings of one would be the concern of all; the joys of one, the happiness of all."

The knowledge of the extinction of all existence in God is the only cure for the blunder of believing in oneself as a separate dualistic entity, and is the only means to peace of mind.

As the removal of the fallacy of the snake in the rope¹ gives peace and joy, so the subsidence of egoism in *Atman* brings peace and tranquillity to the mind.

No wish stirs in such an unruffled soul, just as no seed sprouts forth from the bosom of a stone, and such desires as may at any time arise in it are like waves of the sea, rising and falling in the same element.

All is himself, and the whole of this Universe without any partition or duality is in him : he is one with the supreme God.

When the mind is freed from its habitual fickleness and feverish heat, it regains its former serenity, just as the rolling wave returns to the state of still water from which it arose.

Little minds are led by their greediness to live in sorrowful affairs, like insects moving about in the mire, and their miserliness makes them covet only outer things, neglecting the supreme *Atman* within.

O Rama-ji, when you come to see the greatness of your *Atman*, by the light of the holy Yoga, taught by the illustrious Manu²

¹ *Snake in the rope* : This is the well-known simile, used by Vedantins to illustrate the relationship between *Brahman* and the phenomenal world. The universe exists phenomenally in *Brahman*, and is supported by *Brahman*, but has no independent existence, like an illusory snake, apparently seen in a dark corner of the room, which, on inspection, turns out to be a length of rope.

² *Manu* : The first King and renowned law-giver of ancient India.

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² *Manu*: The first King and renowned law-giver of ancient India.

himself, you will find yourself to be of greater magnitude than the sky and the ocean put together.

Know well, O beloved Prince, that as the sun does not cease from giving his light to the other hemisphere after he has set here, so does your intelligence continue to glow even after it has run its course in this life.

Release the elephant—your mind—from its fetters of egoism, and the bonds of avarice."

When the holy Sage Vasishtha closed his discourse in the Imperial assembly, he bowed reverently to all the Yogis and Brahmacharis.¹ The Emperor and his sons offered flowers, water and gifts to the Sage. The Devas² showered celestial flowers, and all cried; "JAI! JAI! JAI!"

¹ *Brahmachari* (fem. *brahmacharini*): An accepted disciple who as a student of *Yoga*, observes the yogic discipline and the vow of continence, while serving a traditional Teacher (*Guru*).

² *Deva*: One of the celestial beings. Literally "shining one" (fem. *devi*).

THE FOURTH DISCOURSE

RAMA SAID :

" Sir ! How can we put a stop to the wheel of delusion¹ which by its rapid rotation is constantly grinding every part of our body ? "

VASISHTHA SAID :

" Know, Rama, that the revolving world is that great wheel, and the human heart is its nave or axis, which by its continuous rotation, produces all this delusion within its circumference. If, by means of your manly exertion, you can put an end to the motion of your heart, you will stop the rotation of the circle of delusion at once.

The soul that forgets this counsel is exposed to interminable misery, while, by keeping it always before the mind, it will avoid all difficulties in this world.

The world is in the mind, like the air enclosed in a pot, and you are forever confined in this imaginary mental world of yours, like a gnat imprisoned in the hollow of the pot ; you will only obtain your release by breaking out of this confinement, like the gnat flying into the open air.

The way to be rid of this delusion of the mind

¹ *Wheel of delusion* : The recurring cycle of birth and death.

is to fix your attention upon the present moment, and not to employ your thoughts on past or future events. The mind is clouded so long as the mist of its desires and fancies overshadows it, as the sky is overcast so long as drifting clouds spread over it.

When there is activity in the mind it is invariably accompanied by a train of desires and the sense of pleasure or pain; feelings and passions are its concomitants, as ravens are found near an extinct volcano.

The minds of the wise are not without activity, but, through their knowledge of the vanity of earthly things, they are without those feelings which bind.

They have come to know the insubstantiality and uncertainty of worldly objects and events through knowledge of the nature of things and acquaintance with the teachings of *Adhyatma Yoga*, given in *Sat Sangs* and elsewhere, and also through their association with the Teacher and their habitual practice of meditation and an unselfish life.

Leave untouched whatever is tangible or can be obtained by you through your own agency; remain unaffected and independent of anything in the world, and rely only on your consciousness of Infinity. Think of yourself as sleeping when you are awake; think of yourself as all, and as one with the supreme Spirit.

We revere those Yogis who have known the nature of the Self, and have reached the spiritual state.

The lights of the celestial bodies fade away like candlelight at the sight of *Atman*, and the brilliance of the sun is as a mere glimmer of that Light of lights.

He who knows the truth of God stands pre-eminent among mankind by reason of his self-sacrifice and the greatness of his soul, attained by his practice of *Yoga*.

Those who are ignorant of truth are viler than the asses and other brute creatures that live upon the earth, and are meaner than the mean insects that dwell in holes beneath the ground. They are unreliable, and it is best to keep aloof from them.

The unspiritual man is tossed about on earth and is consumed by the fuel of his cares, as a dead body is burnt by the flames of its funeral pyre; but the *Yogi* is conscious of his immortality.

Do not delay to lop off with the sharp axe of reason the huge trunk of the poisonous tree of avarice which rises like a high hill in the cavity of the heart; cut off the bough of expectation and prune its leaves of desire without the least delay.

Rama, listen to what thy grandsire says to the future yogis! Drive away the ravenous crow-like soul from the nest of thy heart; it is fond of frequenting filthy places, as ravens hover over the funeral ground and crows squat on dirty places and fatten their bodies by feeding on the flesh of rotting carcases. It uses its lips like the bill of a crow, only to hurt others.

THE FIFTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" Selfish egoism is the root of the wide-extending branches of misery in the forest of this world, whose trees produce the poisonous blossoms of desires. Therefore, O Rama, be diligent in wiping from your heart the sense of egoism, and try to be happy by considering always the nothingness of your little self.¹

The error of egoism is like a dark cloud ; it hides the bright disc of the moon of truth in its gloom and causes the shining moonbeams to disappear from view. The mistaken impression of the reality of the world is never to be effaced without the knowledge of its unreality derived from the *Shastras*, and the living lips of a Teacher.²

He who preaches the unreality of the world and the reality of *Brahman* is derided by the ignorant as a madman. The wise and the ignorant cannot agree on this subject, as drunken and sober men cannot meet together.

The intelligent man, who believes that the

¹ *Little self* : The empirical ego. See note on p. 26.

² *Living lips of a Teacher* : The Eastern tradition maintains that no man can acquire self-realisation merely from the study of books, ceremonial rituals or by the practice of an ethical life ; he must have a living Teacher (*Guru*).
†

supreme and ever-quietescent Spirit of *Brahman* pervades the universe, is not to be led away from his firm conviction.

The ignorant have no notion of Spirit ; they believe Matter to be the cause and effect of its own production. But the wise man sees the pervading Spirit in all forms of creation as he sees the substance, gold, in all ornaments made of that metal.

There is but one Being Who is really Existent, Who is Truth and Consciousness Himself, and of the nature of calm and pure Intelligence. He is immaculate, all-pervading, quiescent and without rise or fall.

Being perfect quietude and calm, He sees nothing existent ; and these creations subsist in that stillness as particles of His own splendour.

As the stars are seen to shine resplendent in the darkness of night, and the waves to float on the surface of the waters, so do all these phenomena appear to occur in His reality.

Whatever that Being purposes Himself to be, He immediately conceives Himself to be the same ; it is that Intelligence alone which is the true Reality, and all others are only real when viewed as rising and setting in It.

We also have sprung from that divine Will ; hence there is neither reality nor unreality in any of us.

The waking state of that Intelligence is called the phenomenal world, and its state of sleep and rest is what we call salvation, emancipation, or liberation from pain.

Now listen, O Rama, and I will tell you how to know this divine Truth.

The high-minded man regards the world as a straw, and discards all its concerns as a snake casts off its slough.

He whose mind is illumined by the wondrous light of the truth of holy *Adhyatma* Yoga, is always under the protection of spiritual laws, as the mundane Egg¹ is ever protected by *Brahman*.

Come to the Teacher, O Rama, in faith and reverence and listen daily to the holy Truth from his lips, serving him with all your power. One day you will receive the divine Truth through him and you will be free.

Those who are renowned for their virtues have power to bring their destiny under their command, convert their evils into good and render their prosperity perpetual. Those who are dissatisfied with their present state and wish to qualify themselves further, and those who thirst after knowledge and are seekers of the Truth, are truly called human beings; all others are but brutes.

The recurring desire to enjoy what has been enjoyed, and to see what has been seen, is not the way to be rid of the world, but is the cause of many births for the sake of the same enjoyments.

Let the world resound with the greatness of

¹ *Mundane egg* : In the description of the Creation given in the *Upanishads*, the Universe in its primal form as the cosmic mind (*Hiranyagarbha*) is spoken of as the Egg of *Brahma*.

your virtues, of your renunciation, excellent conduct, unselfish service of men and devotion to God in the Teacher, for those whose good deeds shine as moonbeams are said to be truly living, while all others, unknown to such fame, are dead though yet alive.

The fruits of consummation ripen through patiently following the injunctions of the *Shastras* and repeating the *mantrams*¹ given at the Initiations without haste for success, and by perfecting oneself through long practice.

Of what avail are wealth, comeliness, fame or power without a knowledge of Truth? Therefore, devote yourself to learning and consider riches to be but worthless trash.

Arise and accept an antidote to ward off old age and death; it is the knowledge that all wealth and prosperity, all pleasures and enjoyments are harmful to us unless devoted to the good of others; they tend only to sicken and enervate our frames.

Now, Rama-ji, this is the highest Truth. Blessed are those who hear it, and thrice-blessed are those who make its realisation the one end of their life.

Brahman is the intellect,

Brahman is the mind,

Brahman is the intelligence.

He is substance, He the sound,

He is the principle in all things.

¹ *Mantram*: Short mystic prayer, given by a traditional Guru to an accepted disciple at a Yogic Initiation. When correctly repeated, it induces spiritual consciousness.

The whole universe is *Brahman*,
And yet He infinitely transcends all this.
In reality the world is a thing of naught, for
all is *Brahman* alone.

Beside the fact of the existence of *Brahman*
there is nothing which can be proved as absolutely certain, and it is scriptural truth which says:—'Verily, all is *Brahman*.'

Shun this grand display of the world which is so substantial to sight, and so inane when experienced; it is the den of the dragons of desire, foaming with the poison of their passions.

Try to relinquish your desire and you will evade all difficulties; cease to think of a thing, and your desire for it will disappear of itself. Even the crushing of a flower is attended by some effort, but it requires no effort to destroy your desire, for it will vanish of itself for want of thought.

You have to open your hand to lay hold of a flower, but you have nothing to do to destroy your frail and false desires.

Your thoughts being withheld from objects and fixed on *Brahman*, you will be enabled to do what is impossible for others to effect.

The whole concern of our lives is to desire and to be doing, and then back to desiring again; but when all restless craving is rooted out of the mind, it becomes free from all anxieties.

Forsaking your fond reliance on visible phenomena, leave these things and remain rooted in the consciousness—'I am Infinite.'

Until the notion of the desirability of one

THE FIFTH DISCOURSE

thing and the undesirability of another is effaced from the mind, it is as hard to obtain peace and the grace of equanimity as it is difficult for the moonlight to pierce through a cloudy sky.

Our desires and dislikes are two apes living in the tree of our hearts; while they continue to shake and agitate it, with their jogging and jolting, there can be no rest for it."

THE SIXTH DISCOURSE

PRINCE RAMA SAID :

" Venerable Sir, you are acquainted with the mysteries of all things. I have a great doubt surging in my breast like a wave on the sea. How is it, Sir, that any foulness can attach to the mind, when it is situated in the eternal purity of the Infinite Spirit, *Brahman*, which is unbounded by time and space ?

Again, as there is nothing—nor ever was, nor ever will be, anything—other than that spiritual Entity, how and whence could such impurity appear in Him ? "

VASISHTHA ANSWERED :

" Well said, beloved Prince ! I see your understanding approaches the way of liberation, and is extracting the sweetness of the blossoms of the garden of paradise. Yet this is not the proper time for you to put this question. You should ask it when I come to the conclusion of the subject.

It is best to investigate the mind by noting the nature of its acts and operations, which tend to cause the repeated births of mankind. The mind delights itself with the thoughts of desired objects ; then, itself assimilating their natures, it takes on the same form as the one in which it delights.

The body being subject to the mind, is moulded in the same form as the mind, just as the wind is perfumed by the odour of the flower-beds over which it passes.

The inner senses, being stimulated, actuate the outer organs of sense in their own ways. Whatever nature the mind adopts by its habits, the same shoots forth in the form of its two activities, the will and action.

The Sages of holy *Adhyatma* Yoga acknowledge the mind to be, in essence, *Brahman* Himself, and preach peace and self-control as the only means of attaining liberation.

Beloved disciple (Rama touched the feet of the holy Sage in extreme reverence), know the mind to be the source of all rules and methods, as the sea is the source of every pearl lying hidden in its bosom.

There is no innate sweetness in the sugarcane, nor bitterness in the *nimba* tree, for both are equally aided by insects, neither is there any inherent heat or cold in the sun and moon, for both are peopled by gods and spirits. It is the intrinsic habit of the mind that makes the difference.

Thus those disciples, dear to their *gurus*, who desire to enjoy the unadulterated happiness of their souls, should accustom their minds to dwell in that happy state.

The mind, having fled from the sphere of the phenomenal world, becomes free from all pleasure and pain, like the fledgling that flies into the air, casting its shell and leaving the earth below.

O sinless Rama, cherish no fondness for the phenomenal world. It is an unreal illusion, full of fear and evil inclinations, and is stretched out to ensnare the heedless mind.

The wise have called our consciousness of the world a magic scene (*maya*) an appearance of ignorance, a mere thought, and the cause and effect of our actions.

Know that it is the delusive mind that stretches the visible world before you ; therefore, cleanse it of this stain.

It is the abstract meditation of the thoughtful Yogi, devoted to the holy *Yoga*, that weakens the outer impressions, and, by dissociating the soul from all external things, keeps it steady and sedate in itself. The mind does not then pay attention to its inward or outward reflections and is insensible to pleasure and pain, and feels in itself the delight of unity.

The mind that is subject to endless desires is like the clear firmament obscured by clouds ; such a soul, O Rama, suffers like a bat, blinded by daylight, until, having got rid of its false imaginings, it comes to the knowledge of the true God and unending happiness.

As one freed from an unfounded fear of a tiger in a forest, is set at rest within himself, so, on looking deeply, you will find no bondage in the world ; the notions that 'this is the world' and 'this is myself' are only errors of the mind.

Our fancies alight on us at one time and depart at another, and assume different forms

at will, just as our consorts act the part of wives in our youth and of nurses in our old age.

He whose mind is bent upon the enjoyment of carnal pleasures should first of all check these inclinations, as one pulls up poisonous plants from the ground.

The brave and wise man, who intends to overcome his foes, must first of all strive to subdue the internal enemies of his own heart and mind, and the members of his own body.

Those men are the most prosperous, who have the manliness to govern their minds, instead of being governed by them.

I revere those pure and holy men who have quelled the huge and crooked serpent of their minds, lying coiled in the cave of their heart ; they rest in the inward tranquillity and serenity of their souls.

The kings of the earth in their earthly capitals are not as happy as are the lords of the cities of their own bodies, and the masters of their own minds.

Man is exposed to the difficulties of this dark and dismal world like a bird that has fallen into the waters of the sea. Therefore, O Rama, like a buffalo, raise your mind by your own effort out of the delusive puddle of the world.

The man whose mind is not troubled in this world by successive joy and grief, or by the vicissitudes of disease and death, is no human being but resembles a *Yaksha*.¹

The world is not yours, nor are you of this

¹ *Yaksha* : One of an order of celestial beings.

world ; do not take the false for the true. Never foster in your mind the mistaken idea that you are master of great possessions and pleasant things ; for both yourself and the pleasant things are for the delight of the supreme Maker and Master of all.

Unless the good of all becomes your good, Rama, you will only add fetters to your feet. Even the good of your own Empire is a delusion, O Prince, if it is exclusive, and divorced from the good of all beings.

Worship the Ever-Compassionate, the infinite Love, as your own soul and rest in peace, giving peace to all."

THE SEVENTH DISCOURSE

PRINCE RAMA SAID :

" Now tell me, Sir, how can an ignorant man acquire liberation,—one who is lazy, addicted to baseness, and has never associated with Yogis, nor received spiritual instruction ? "

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

" O Rama, the ignorant man, who has never attained to any of the states of *Yoga*, is carried by the current of re-incarnation through hundreds of births, until he happens to acquire spiritual light in one birth or another ; or it may be that he becomes dissatisfied with the world through his association with holy men, and this is the ground of one of the stages of *Yoga*.

O Rama-ji, destroy sensuality ! This is the first stage. What is the good of using many words when it can be described in few ?

Desire is our greatest bondage, and its absence our complete liberation. He who has a strong sense of egoism is never released from the miseries of life ; it is the negation of this feeling that produces liberation.

Those who are addicted to enjoyment, consider the bliss of *Nirvana*¹ as nothing ; they

¹ *Nirvana* : Conscious immortality. Identification of the individual spirit with the infinite supreme Spirit ; eternal freedom ; spiritual perfection.

give preference to worldliness over the final bliss of others, and he who acts his part in this way is styled an active and energetic man.

Such a man of the world bears resemblance to a turtle which, with its neck withdrawn into its shell, still sometimes stretches it out to drink the salt water of the sea it inhabits ; so he remains until after many births he obtains a better life tending towards his salvation.

But he who reflects on the nothingness of the world and on the misery of his position in it, does not allow himself to be carried away day after day by the current of his old duties here.

When a man begins to consider how he may become passionless and cross over the boisterous ocean of the world, he has come to his senses.

He who condemns the foolish amusements and the mean activities of men ; who employs himself in meritorious acts instead of dwelling upon the faults and failings of others ; he whose mind is engaged in useful deeds, causing no pain to others, and is indifferent to all pleasures and bodily enjoyments ; whose discourses are loving and tender ; whose words are suited to the time and place at which they are delivered ; such a man is said to stand upon the first step of Yoga. He makes it his duty to seek the society of the good, whom he learns to imitate in thought, word and deed.

He collects books on the divine philosophy and studies them with diligence ; he then considers their content and lays hold of their

tenets, which have the power to save him from the sinful world.

He then comes to the second step of *Yoga*, which is called the stage of enquiry.

He hears from the lips of the traditionally-chosen *pundits* the explanation of the *Shrutis* and *Smritis*,¹ the rules of good conduct and the manner of meditation and *Yoga* practice.

He throws off his outer habit of pride and vanity, his jealousy and avarice, as a snake casts off its slough. Having thus purified his mind, he attends affectionately to the service of his spiritual preceptors and of holy persons, and hears from them the mysteries of the philosophy of *Yoga*. He then enters upon the third stage.

He learns to fix his mind in steadiness, according to the teachings of the *Yoga*, and passes his time in talking of spiritual subjects, and doing good to others.

The wise man, who has arrived at the third stage of *Yoga*, remains in that state of consciousness which is free from both objectivity and subjectivity.

He is free² from the sense of being either the subject or the object of his actions.

He knows that all union ends in disunion and all earthly gain, in loss; through this conviction and the continuous practice of meditation and virtue, he assuredly comes to

¹ *Smritis* : Lit. "What has been remembered." The traditional teaching handed down from past generation, as opposed to *Śruti*, "What was revealed," the revealed Scriptures.

² *Free* : The yogi no longer regards himself either as the doer of actions or as being affected by them.

know God within himself, as clearly and certainly as one sees a fruit in the palm of the hand.

Knowledge of the supreme Author of Creation impresses him with the certain conviction that it is not 'I' but God Who does everything in the world.

Having renounced his sense¹ of individuality, such a man is not attached to anything in the world.

Contentment is as a sweet fragrance in the mind, and virtuous acts are as beautiful as the petals of a rose. The flower of inward discrimination is opened like the lotus bud by the sunbeams of reason and produces the fruit of holiness in the garden of the third stage of Yoga practice.

The performance of even a part of some of these stages of this holy *Adhyatma Yoga* is sufficient to remit past evil *karma*.²

These three stages, O Rama-jī, are called the waking state, because in them the Yogi retains the perception of the difference of things.

Such a Yogi becomes venerable; he is employed only in righteous deeds; he is steadfast in the discharge of his social duties.

He who devotes his mind to *Yoga* with undivided attention from first to last, and sees all

¹ *Sense of individuality*: The sense of agency, of being a 'doer.' Egoity.

² *Karma*: The sum of the effects of past actions (including actions done in previous incarnations) which fructify as the present and future destiny of the individual soul. The law of cause and effect, considered in relation to human conduct.

things in one even light, is said to have arrived at the fourth stage of the Holy Yoga.

As the error of duality disappears, and the knowledge of inner unity shines supremely bright, the Yogi is in the fourth stage of the Yoga, and he sees the world as a vision in his dream.

The fifth stage is one of great joy—nothing but the joy of the vision of God on all sides, O Rama-ji. The Yogi rises above this, and coming down through the mind into the lower regions—a great sacrifice indeed!—he serves his own Self in others.

The sixth is the stage of liberation, while living, O Rama-ji, in which both unity and duality disappear. He who reaches it is full of divine ecstasy within and without, and is possessed of higher powers; yet he appears as worthless on the surface.

The seventh stage is indescribable by words, and surpasses the limits of this earth or heaven. It is said to resemble the state of *Shiva*¹ and *Brahma*."

¹ *Shiva*: The third aspect of the Hindu Trinity. *Brahma*, *Viṣṇu* and *Shiva*, who are said to preside over the creation, preservation and dissolution of the Universe respectively. *Shiva* is also spoken of as the Lord of Yogis.

THE EIGHTH DISCOURSE

PRINCE RAMA SAID :

" Sir, your discourse gives rise to a doubt in my mind, like an autumn cloud, which I beg you to disperse.

Tell me, Sir,—you who are best acquainted with spiritual knowledge!—why the bodies of beings liberated-in-life are not to be seen mounting into the skies ? "

HOLY VASISHTHA REPLIED :

" Know, O Rama, that the power of mounting into the sky, and of flying in the air, belongs naturally to all volant creatures, such as the insects and birds of the air.

The various motions that are seen to take place in different directions are according to the natural tendencies of bodies and are never desired by the liberated yogi.

To fly in the air is in no way desirable to the living, liberated yogi. The volant power is easily acquired by unspiritual, unliberated, and ignorant people, through artificial physical means, such as *mantrams* and other practices of the lower¹ Yoga.

¹ *Lower Yoga* : Certain practices can induce psychic powers, a fact known to the followers of the lower Yoga, but the genuine yogi is warned against them, since they are obstacles to further progress in Yoga.

Flying is no business of the spiritual yogi, who is concerned only with a knowledge of the Spirit; he is content with his spiritual knowledge and union with the Supreme, and does not meddle with the practices of the ignorant and false *Hatha-Yogis*.¹

Know all earthly schemes to be the offspring of spiritual blindness. Say, then, what true yogi is there who will be so foolish as to plunge himself into this gross ignorance?

He who pursues such a course scheming for temporal well-being, must be blind to his future welfare!

It is possible, by means of *mantrams* and other methods, for both the wise and the ignorant to acquire the power of flying in the air, but the real yogi remains aloof from these things and has no desire for them; he is content in himself and finds rest in *Brahman*.

He remains unmoved at all times, as the ocean is unaffected despite all the rivers flowing into it; and he continues to adore, and meditate on the divine Spirit in his own soul."

Prince Rama bowed to the feet of his Teacher, and holy Vasishtha blessed him by kissing his head, and continued:—

"Know, O noble Prince, that the possession of the mind is the cause of woes, and its extinction in God is the source of happiness.

¹ *Hatha-Yogis*: *Hatha-Yoga* is a lower form of *Yoga*, dealing chiefly with the body and aiming at the pacification of the passions through physical austerities and exercises. *Hatha-Yoga*, which may have dangerous consequences unless practised under proper supervision and which does not of itself lead to the goal of self-realisation, forms no part of the higher *Yoga*, called *Adhyatma Yoga*.

The mind that is beset by vain desires for perishable objects is subject to repeated births, which are a source of endless sorrow, but the mind that is *filled with benevolent qualities*, desires the highest good for all beings and is freed from the pangs of repeated births in this world of woe.

The body resembles a branching tree set about with the creepers of its actions; avarice is like a huge serpent coiling about it, and our passions and desires are as birds nesting in it.

The world is no more than a creation of our imagination, as boys imagine a goblin to be hidden in the dark. Our knowledge of objects is as deceptive as the appearance of movement in a mountain to a passenger in a boat. All appearances are a manifestation of error or ignorance, and disappear when right knowledge is acquired.

O Rama, O beloved pupil, forsake material things and seek the universal One, who is the *substratum* of all existence. Know this Unity as the totality of all beings and the only One to be adored.

Think of all bodies as appertaining to the One common Essence, and enjoy the full bliss of realising yourself as the same, extending throughout all space.

He in whom all finite existences are dissolved, remains Himself without change; knowing Him in his own Self, no man can be subject to grief, but enjoys full bliss in Him.

All things are seen in the mirror of His intelligence, even as the shadows of the trees on the bank of a river are reflected in the limpid stream below.

He is brighter than the brightest, more obscure than the darkest thing; He is the *substratum* of all substance, and farthest from all sides of the compass.

Beloved Prince, try ardently to rest in that supreme state of felicity, than which there is no higher state for man to desire. Then, O Rama-ji, be profoundly wise, yet frank and sweet in your conversation. See everything in the one changeless light of *Atman*; let your mind be neither afraid of bondage, nor eager for release. Live in truth, in meditation, and hear the holy teachings reverently from me, or from any other source.

The *Shastras* must be heard and discussed, O Rama, because they distil the holy texts with sweetness and infuse the soft balm of true knowledge into the mind.

As the sun's rays falling on the walls of the houses, become perceptible to us through our visual organs, so the light of spiritual knowledge pierces into the souls of men through the medium of their ears, by the hearing of the *Shastras*.

That is the best learning which gives us the knowledge of Truth, and that is true knowledge which gives us equanimity, causing us to sleep in forgetfulness of the waking and tumultuous world."

Prince Rama bowed to the illumined Sage, and said :—

“ O holy Lord, dearer to me than my life, your appearance and speech have sprinkled this place with sweet drops of joy and holiness; truly the company of the virtuous is the supreme felicity of man ! ”

The King and the Queen and the Ministers of State stood up in reverence, touched his feet, and offered flowers, water and gifts to the holy Sage who, by way of blessing, said “ *Om Tat Sat !¹ Shanti !² Shanti ! Shanti !* ”

Om Tat Sat . The triple designation of Brahman.
Shanti : Peace.

THE NINTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" In a region of the North, on the summit of the Himalayas, there is a peak called Kailasha.

Here the great God *Shiva* wanders about, watching the waterfalls which spring from and disappear into the mountain caves.

Here, there once lived a race of men whose Chief was Surghu. He was powerful, hospitable and considerate.

The Sages are wont to wander about, relieving suffering and reducing ignorance, and so it happened that the Sage Mandavya once visited these people.

Surghu welcomed the Sage, and said : ' I am supremely blessed by this visit, which makes me as joyous as is the earth at the coming of Spring. The thought of the rewards and punishments I have meted out to my dependants has been incessantly tormenting my heart. Deign, therefore, O holy Sage, to remove this pain of mine, and cause the sunshine of peace and equanimity to brighten the gloom of my mind.'

Mandavya replied : ' It is, O Prince, by means of one's own exertion and self-reliance that the doubts of the mind are melted away like snow in the rays of the sun. Self-knowledge, O Prince, is also essential.

Consider in your mind : What am I ? What is this our life, and what is this death which waits upon it ? These enquiries will surely lead you to reverence.

When, by reflection on the state of your mind, you have come to know your true nature, you will remain unmoved either by joy or grief, like a firm rock.

The unimpassioned are honoured as the most fortunate among men, and he who knows this truth rests content in himself and is a Sage.

Great minds avoid concern over outward things so that they may behold the pure light of the supreme Spirit shining within them. Until you are freed from your concern over particular trifles, you can have no vision of the universal Spirit. It is only after the disappearance of all worldly interests that the universality of the transcendental Spirit is known.

Rid yourself of all sense of particulars and you will have a knowledge of universality ; you will begin to comprehend the all-embracing *Atman*.

Only when one endeavours to know the supreme Spirit with all one's heart and soul, and sacrifices all other aims and objects to that end does it become possible to know that Spirit in Its fullness. All visible objects which appear to be linked by the thread of causes and their effects are the creation of the mind, which holds them together as a string holds the pearls of a necklace. That which remains

after the dissolution of the mind and its created bodies, is the *Atman* alone, and that is the Supreme God, the All-Highest.'

The Chief Surghu offered gifts, fruit and flowers to the Sage, who left for some other region to carry on his mission.

Then, as taught by the Sage, Surghu meditated one-pointedly for three years in the stillness of his soul, and realised his God-head.

He said: 'My *Atman* is endowed with all beauty, and is the light that enlightens every object. I see! I see! My *Atman* is formless, yet capable of assuming all forms and manifestation.

The cause of human happiness and misery is a false representation of the understanding. This world is a stage stretched out by the mind, its chief actor, and *Atman* sits silent as a spectator of the scene.

I behold this wonderful sphere of the intellect, now shining upon me in its full splendour, and I hail thee, O holy Light, as I see thee blazing before me.'

The Chief Surghu reigned a hundred years in this state of enlightenment; then he abandoned the habitation of the frail body of his own accord.

That intelligent soul, released from the conditions of re-incarnation, became one with the immaculate Spirit, and was absorbed in the Supreme One, as the air contained in a pot unites with the all-encompassing firmament after the pot is broken."

HOLY VASISHTHA CONTINUED :

"Here are a few teachings of this noble Prince, O Rama-ji, which I give you for the good of mankind.

'What is *samadhi*? The insusceptibility of the mind to the turmoil of pride and enmity is known to the wise by the term *samadhi*; when the mind is unmoved as a rock, firmly withstanding the howling wind of passions, it is in *samadhi*.

When the mind is united with the *buddhi* and acts conjointly with it, this is *samadhi*.

I find myself pure, enlightened and fully conscious at all times. My mind is tranquil and my soul at rest on all occasions.

I find nothing to shake the sweet repose of my soul which has found its anchorage in uninterrupted communion with the holy Spirit, Brahman.

There is nothing in the world that we may look upon as prior to ourselves, for all that shines and glitters here is nothing in reality, and has no intrinsic value.

There being nothing desirable to me here, there is nothing distasteful to me either, because the absence of a thing implies the absence of its contrary also.

The silent Sage who is all-knowing, holy, calm and quiet in himself, is never disturbed by an ungoverned mind.

It is in the security of the service of the high-minded Teacher that the wise soul receives instruction and meditation, for its salvation

THE TENTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" This world is composed of reality and unreality, and bears the stamp of the Almighty; it is made up of unity and duality and is yet free from either.

The perverted intellect which considers itself as the body, is verily confined in it ; but when it knows itself to be identical with the taintless *Atman*, it is liberated from its confinement.

Brahman is all in all ; He is perfect peace, secondless, without equal or comparison. He expands Himself by His own power as the Infinite, and stretches His mind in three different directions—creation, preservation and dissolution.

The mind being curbed, with its senses and organs centred in *Atman*, there appears a dazzling light before it and the unreal world fades away, as the shades of night disappear before the light of the sun.

The imaginary world recedes from view and falls like a withered leaf, and the *jiva* remains like a fired grain, without the power of vegetation or reproduction.

The intellect, cleared of the cloud of illusion, which overhung the deluded mind, shines as clearly as the vault of the autumnal sky.

THE TENTH DISCOURSE

I have now told you, O Rama-ji, of the curbing and weakening of the mind, which is the first step towards the beatification of the soul by *Yoga*; now I will tell you about the second step, the edification and strengthening of the intellect.

With boundless patience, courage and service, carry on your meditations and self-study, and worship God in the holy *Yoga*. Remember, a miserly soul, a greedy soul, a soul believing in its superiority over others, will not see God.

By continued perseverance in this course, the pilgrim is led a great distance on the way, to a state which transcends all my powers of description, but which may be felt by the holy devotee as he advances on his path. All is goodness and peace when in this yogic state. The syllable *Om*¹ is the symbol of the whole.

Hear now the method of the worship of God, O my beloved pupil. In all forms of worship you must cease to think of your body, and separate your mind from your personality. You must then apply your mind diligently, under the guidance of your Teacher, to thinking of the pure and bodiless Spirit, which witnesses the operations of the body from within.

True worship consists in inward meditation alone, and in no outer form of worship; therefore, apply your mind to the adoration of the universal Spirit by meditating within yourself.

¹ *Om* : (or *Aum*) is the Word of Power, belonging to no particular language, but used exclusively as a symbol of the Supreme throughout the East, where it is held to be the highest name of God.

He is the form of the intellect, the source of all light, and glorious as millions of suns! He is the inner light of the mind. His head and shoulders reach above the heaven of heavens; His lotus-like feet descend far below the lowest abyss of space.

The worlds rolling over one another, rest on a corner of His capacious bosom. His effulgence passes beyond the limits of the unlimited void. Above, below, in all four quarters, and on all sides of the compass He extends, undiminished and without end.

He encompasses within Himself this mundane sphere, and all other worlds, their mountains and all they contain; and all-powerful Time, which hurls them ever onward, is the warder at the threshold of His eternity.

He is situate in the midst of all things, and is the sole giver of strength and energy to all. *Tat Twam Asi!* / 'That thou art!'

O, adore Him in yourself! He requires no illumination, or burning of incense.

By constantly talking of this holy subject and continually returning to the enquiry when it has been broken off, one becomes fully conscious of the Self.

The offering of a purified heart, freed from

¹ *Tat Twam Asi* : ("That Thou art!")

Tat (That) Means the transcendental Reality (*Brahman*);

Twam (thou) means the *jiva* or the individualised and conditioned soul;

Asi (art) expresses the eternal identity of the two, *jiva* and *Brahman*.

This is one of the four great sentences in which the Spiritual Truth of the *Vedas* is crystallised.

desire and aversion, is more delectable to Him than fine jewels and the most fragrant flowers.

The best meditation is that which is accompanied by offering oneself to the Lord or to the holy *Yoga*.

Whoso worships the Lord in this manner for a full hour receives the reward of making the *Raja-sacrifice*¹; and by worshipping Him in this form at midnight, one obtains the merit of making thousands of such sacrifices.

When the gentle beams of fellow-feeling illumine the breast of the compassionate *Yogi*, and when the sweet influence of sympathy melts the heart, it is then most meet and proper to serve the Lord seated within, through the yogic meditations.

When a man has restrained the turbulent passions of his breast by the power of right judgment, and has spread the garment of soft compassion and sweet content over his heart and mind, let him then worship divine serenity within himself.

Atman should be meditated upon and the Teacher served in joy as well as in suffering.

Regret not what is lost, and make use of what you have; adore the Lord, the supreme Spirit, in your mind and soul without any inconstancy.

For the good of all living beings, and for universal salvation, maintain your constancy

¹ *Raja sacrifice*: The *Raja-suya* was performed in ancient times at the accession and ceremonial anointing of a king, accompanied by solemn chants, generous gifts to holy brahmins and charity to the poor.

amidst the wicked pursuits of men, and remain true to your vow of holy devotion to *Brahman* and the *Guru* at all times.

Give up thinking of yourself as such-and-such a person ; forsake all trivialities and, knowing that all is the universal One, be constant in your vow to adore the supreme Spirit, *Brahman*.

Placed in this world of misery, man should take no heed of the lesser or greater sights of woe which present themselves to his view. They are as the fleeting tints and hues which paint the empty vault of the sky, and soon vanish into nothing.

Whatever sacrifice may be made in the service of the Lord, know that it is the equanimity of your soul that is the best and fittest offering. Equanimity is sweet to taste and has the supernatural power of transforming everything to ambrosia.

Equanimity expands the soul and gladdens the mind, as the sunlight fills the vault of heaven, and it is considered to be the highest devotion.

By reliance upon right reasoning combined with the habit of dispassion, men are enabled to cross the dark and dangerous torrents of this world.

The virtuous man who is calm and quiet, and friendly to all living beings, feels the benign influence of the highest Truth arising in his mind.

He whose mind is as calm as moonlight, whether at the approach of a feast or of a

battle, or even at the moment of death itself, is verily a saint.

He whose contented glance casts a gentle radiance upon all around him, is said to be a saint.

He who admits not to his mind the tribulations of this life, however long or great they may be, nor thinks this bodily frame to be himself, is known to be a saint.

O virtuous prince, whoever attends to these discourses of mine with faith and devotion, shall undoubtedly grow day by day in the knowledge of God.

All miseries are at an end for him who ponders these spiritual discourses within himself."

When the sun went down, gilding the horizon, and the lotuses on the lake closed their petals, the holy sage Vasishtha concluded his discourse. The Emperor and the Royal Family touched the feet of the Sage, and covered them with gifts of silver, gold and gems; and the *devas* showered down celestial flowers from on high on the assembly, saying: "JAI! JAI! JAI!"

THE ELEVENTH DISCOURSE

RAMA SAID :

"Of all the practices of which you have spoken, O merciful Lord, tell me which is the most essential in leading us to the supreme *Brahman*."

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

"By your manly fortitude, you can relinquish your desire for temporal objects and turn your endeavours to the search for that which is the first and best of goals ; and if you remain in deep and exclusive meditation on the supreme Being, you will assuredly see the divine Light shining in and before you.

It is not possible to realise the knowable Spirit all at once, unless you continually keep It in your consciousness. If you will strive to renounce your earthly appetites, you will be free from disease and danger. As long as you do not subdue the mind, you cannot get rid of your desires ; and unless you suppress your desires, you cannot control your restless mind.

Hence, knowledge of Truth, subjection of the mind and abandonment of desires are the joint causes of spiritual bliss, which is unattainable by the practice of any one of them singly.

Unless you become an adept in the practice of these three means, it is impossible to attain the state of divine perfection by mere devotion, during a whole century.

Continue to practise them at all times in your life, whether you sit quiet or move about, when you talk or when you listen.

Ignorant men who attempt to subdue the mind by the practice of *Hatha yoga*, or bodily restraints, are like those foolish folk who try to dispel darkness by black ink instead of by a lighted lamp.

Remain quiet and sedate, placing your faith in your inward Consciousness. Know that knowledge is power and that the knower is the strongest being on earth; therefore, be wise in all respects.

The man who has acquired a perfect knowledge of God is full of unfailing rapture within himself, is liberated in this life and reigns supreme over the empire of his mind. He turns his attention to nothing either sweet or bitter, but delights in his own thoughts.

Whether his body is cloven under the axe or broken upon the wheel, whether impaled in a charnel house or exiled in a desert land, the believer in *Brahman* remains inflexible.

Knowing the world to consist of consciousness, the mind of the wise man is rapt in the thought of his universality and roams free, seeing the cosmos as space in his own consciousness.

Know your Self—Consciousness—to be all in all, O wise Prince, and reject as false everything

which appears to be otherwise ; as everything is embodied in yourself, there is nothing for you to own or disown.

It is the spiritual abandonment of connections which is called liberation ; it is the forsaking of earthly attachments which releases us from being re-born ; it is a freedom from wordly thoughts which emancipates in this life.

One who attends to the hereditary duties which life has imposed on him and discharges them with a mind free from all concern and expectation, is truly happy in himself.

Live by the clear and purling stream of your investigation into Truth and in the light of your understanding, and you will come to rely on the unsullied and incorruptible state of *Atman*.

O Rama, whatever exists in earth, sky or heaven, is obtainable by you through relinquishment of your fervent desires and hatreds.

Whatever a man endeavours to do, with his mind held firmly aloof from liking or disliking it, that same endeavour comes quickly to fruition."

When the holy Teacher Vasishtha concluded his discourse in the royal assembly, all stood up in reverence, and the Emperor with his Queen and Ministers touched the feet of the holy *Guru*, offering gifts. They said :—

"JAI ! JAI ! JAI !"

THE TWELFTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" Now listen while I tell you the best remedy for the disease of the heart ; it is within one's own power to obtain, harmless and a sweet potion to taste.

It is by exerting your own consciousness and by diligently relinquishing all objects of desire that you can bring your refractory mind into subjection. He who remains at rest, giving up the objects of his desire, is verily the conqueror of his mind.

The mind is to be carefully treated, by cool reasoning, by the precepts of the *Shastras*, and by association with the dispassionate.

As a boy at play has no difficulty in turning himself this way and that, so it is not difficult to turn the mind at will from one thing to another.

Employ your mind in acts of goodness, under the light of your understanding, occupying your soul in meditation on God, under the light of your spirit.

The renunciation of a highly desirable object is in the power of one who resigns himself to the divine Will. He who can accept the unpleasant as the pleasant, may with ease subdue his mind as a giant overcomes a boy by his strength.

The one all-pervading quiescent *Brahman* can be known only when the desires of the mind are cut off by the weapon of indifference to worldly things.

First, unite yourself to your intellectual or abstract thoughts and then to your spiritual aspirations. Being thus the master of your mind, contemplate the nature of *Brahman*.

It is by your exertion and fixed attention, O Rama, that you can correct the errors of your mind. Calmness of mind produces absence of anxiety, and the man who has been able to subdue his mind cares not a fig for the subjugation of the world.

Nobody is born or dies at any time ; it is the mind that conceives its birth and death and its migration to other bodies and other worlds.

The ever-fluctuating power of motion which is implanted in the mind, is of the same nature as the self-energising force of the divine Mind which is the cause of the motion and momentum of these worlds.

Only the mind is capable of subduing the mind, for who can subdue a king unless he be a king himself ?

Shun your desire for earthly enjoyments and forsake your sense of duality ; then rid yourself of the impressions of entity and non-entity and be happy in the knowledge of unity.

Be wise, O Rama, and do not think like the ignorant. Consider well all that I tell you. There is no second moon in the sky, and it appears so only because of an optical deception

in our vision. There exists nothing real or unreal anywhere except only the one true essence of God.

There is no reality in anything, whether existent or non-existent ; all are creations of your shadowy self. Do not, therefore, impute any shape or figure to the eternal, boundless and pure Spirit of God.

As the whole world is a show, magical and unreal, then what reliance can be placed upon it, and what signifies pleasure or pain ? Know this egg of the world to be a phantom idea, presented for the delusion of our minds.

Sometimes it seems to be straight and at others curved ; now it is long, now short ; now it is moving, now quiet again ; and everything in it is continually in motion, yet it seems to be standing still.

Men think much of their own advancement and of many other worldly things ; but there is no improvement in this decaying world, which is as a tempting dish, sweet-coated, yet full of deadly gall within.

It is as an extinguished lamp, whose flame is lost, fled we know not where. It is as intangible as a mist ; try to lay hold of it, and it proves to be nothing !

Know God, O Rama, and serve those who speak of Him to you. He alone is real. Know it now or after a thousand incarnations !

Grasp the opportunity of a *Sat-Sang*, or the proximity of a Teacher and know God.

This world is no more than a network of our

bondage of life. Whatever form it dwells upon with fondness, that same form it assumes to itself, and cannot get rid of it as long as it cherishes affection for it, nor can it return to its original purity until it is freed from impure passions.

I tell you, O Rama, if you cannot do without loving some form, then love the form of an *Avatar* of God, for you do become what you love and serve sincerely.

Until you know the Truth, you cannot have peace of mind, and as long as you are a stranger to mental tranquillity, you are debarred from knowing the Truth.

As long as you do not shun earthly desires, you cannot come to the light of Truth. Subjection of the mind and abandonment of desires are the joint causes of spiritual bliss, which is otherwise unattainable by the practice of either of them singly.

Be devoted to your meditations and to the good of all living beings.

A true *Adhyatma Yogi* is neither sad nor sorrowful in his wanderings over the world, nor is he joyous and elated when at rest. He rejoices to do his duty with lightness of heart, like a porter bearing his burden with a willing mind.

Whether his body is broken under the wheel, whether it is impaled in the charnel ground or exiled in a desert land, whether pierced by a spear or battered by a cudgel, the believer in the true God remains inflexible.

Live by the clear stream of your investigation

and you will come to rest in the unsullied state of pure consciousness; then coming to the knowledge and sight of *Brahman* by the light of your understanding, you will no more be chained to the bonds of future births upon this earth."

THE THIRTEENTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" I once besought the holy Sage Bhushundi to tell us how he was able to escape from the hands of Death, when all other beings in the world are doomed to be crushed in its all-devouring jaws.

Bhushundi said :

' You, Sir, who know all things, would yet ask me to tell that which you know full well ? Such bidding from his Master emboldens your servant to speak out where he would otherwise have held his tongue.

Death will not destroy the man who does not wear upon his body the jewels of his vicious desires, as a robber does not kill a traveller who has no precious chain of gold round his neck.

Death will not prey upon the person who is not vitiated by the poison of anger and enmity ; whose heart does not foster the dragon of avarice in its darkness, and whose mind is not corroded by the canker of cares.

Death does not kill the person whose body is not inflamed by the fiery passion of attachment, which consumes like wild-fire the hoarded grain of good sense.

Death does not approach the man who puts his trust in the one taintless and purifying Spirit of God, and whose soul rests in the lap of the supreme Soul.

Thus, the mind resting in its Maker in an unalterable state of calm repose, the evils and diseases of the world do not overtake it.

He whose mind is rapt in holy meditation, neither gives to, nor receives anything from, others; nor does he, at any time, attempt to reject what he has, or to seek what he has not.

He whose mind has found repose in holy meditation, has no cause for repentance.

Lift your mind above the multiplicity of worldly possessions, and settle it in the unity of the Spirit.

Set your heart towards that supreme felicity which is pleasant both in the beginning and the end.

Apply your mind to *Brahman*, Which is beyond your comprehension—to that holy Light, the beginning and source of all, in Which abides all good fortune and the ambrosial food of our souls.

There is nothing so lovely and enduring in the regions which surround us, above and below, as the lasting peace of a mind centred in God.

It is not good to trouble the mind by pre-occupation with all branches of learning, nor is it of any advantage to enslave it in the service of another, when one is ignorant of oneself and of one's own true welfare.

THE THIRTEENTH DISCOURSE

It is no good merely to live long, afflicted by disease and the sorrow of life.

Since all things are inconstant, unprofitable and displeasing to men, the wise see that there is but One Reality, imperishable and beyond all error, which, though present everywhere, transcends the knowledge of all.

This Essence is *Atman*, and meditation on It is the only means of removing all sorrow and affliction. It alone destroys the erroneous vision of the world.

Divine contemplation dawns in the clear atmosphere of the unpolluted mind and spreads over its whole expanse like the solar light; it destroys the darkness of sorrow and suffering and the erroneous thought of duality.

Divine meditation in the form of *So-Hum*,¹ or *Shivo-Hum*,² unaccompanied by any desire or selfish aim, penetrates like the moon's rays through the darkness of the night of ignorance.

There is a distant resemblance to this spiritual light in the intellectual light of the philosophers.

I sit quiet at all times, with thought fixed on the rhythm of my breath and I never stir for an instant from this mood even though Mount Meru may shake under me.

The land has been rising and sinking again and again since the great Deluge, and I have been a witness of the submersion and emersion of the continents, without any change in my peace, born of God-realisation.

¹ *So-Hum*: 'I am He.'
² *Shivo-Hum*: 'I am Bliss.' 'I am Shiva.'

I watch the course of my inspiration and expiration, and behold the super-excellence of *Brahman*, whereby I rest satisfied in myself and enjoy my long life without any sorrow or sickness.

I never praise or dispraise any act of my own or others, and this detachment from all concerns, has brought me to this happy state of carefree longevity.

I have freed my mind, O great *Muni*, from its faults of fickleness and unprofitable curiosity, and have established it in *Brahman* above all sorrow and anxiety; it has become deliberate, calm and quiet, and thus have I acquired this long life.

I am neither afraid of death, disease nor old age, nor am I elated at the idea of acquiring an empire; this detachment is the cause of my physical longevity.

I do not regard anyone, O great Sage, in the light of friend or foe, and this equanimity is the cause of my long life.

I regard all existence as the reflection of the Self-existent *Brahman*, Who is all in all; and I know the Self as That, '*So-Hum*,' and this is the cause of my long life, O great *Rishi*.

This physical body is never regarded by me as my *Atman*, and this supreme knowledge has made me long-lived.

I am so composed in my mind that I never allow it to become entangled in worldly affairs, nor do I allow these affairs to touch my heart, and this has conferred on me the bliss of my unfading longevity.

I am happy at the happiness of others, and try to remove the misery of all beings, and this universal fellow-feeling for the weal and woe of my brethren has kept me alive and youthful at all times.

I remain unmoved as a rock in adversity and am friendly to everyone in prosperity. I am never moved by want or affluence, and this steadiness of mind is the cause of my unfailing longevity.

It is my firm conviction that I am that Intelligence Which manifests Itself in the universe, Which dwells in the sky above and the woods below ; and it is this conviction that makes me Master of life and death.

It is thus, O holy Sage, that I reside in the cup of the three worlds, as a bee abides in the cell of a lotus flower, and am renowned in the world as the perennial Sage, Bhushundi by name.'

I replied to him :

' O venerable Sir, you have given me a wondrous discourse. I have, in my wanderings about the world, witnessed the grandeur and dignity of gods and learned men, but I have not seen so holy a Sage as yourself. Salutations to thee, O knower of *Brahman* ! ' "

He is not in love with any surroundings, but dwells secure in any state, whether it be in the company of friends in a pleasant garden, or in learned discussion in an assembly of scholars.

Wherever he goes or stays, he is always calm and self-governed, silent and in command of himself. Though well-informed, he is yet ever in quest of knowledge, and enquiring into Truth.

Thus the holy sage is wont to sit in meditation on the low ground, and by his constant practice is absorbed in the supreme One in a state of transcendental bliss.

This supreme state consists of unawareness of sensible objects, and the consciousness of the presence of the Omniscient Spirit filling all space.

The sage who has seen the glory of God is seated in the region of light ; and like a lighted lamp he dispels the inner darkness, together with all his outer fears, animosities and affections.

I bow down before that sunlike sage, who is beyond darkness in all directions, who is raised above all created things, and whose great glory is never liable to be diminished."

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama, O wise Prince, you have known the spiritual truth in theory through your keen intellect, and nothing else remains to be known by you ; but your mind, though naturally pure, needs just a little modification, so that you may realise the Truth in practice.

The intellect of Shuka Deva, son of the holy Sage Vyasa, had known the Truth theoretically

from his great father, yet it was through the proximity of the Teacher that the realisation came to him. Your case is similar to that of Shuka Deva."

RAMA SAID :

"O Lord, how was it that the son of Vyasa, having known the Truth, yet remained without bliss until his Teacher taught him? Be gracious enough to tell me this."

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

"O Prince, holy Vyasa, of limitless light and learning, is now sitting in the assembly of your royal father, and his son, Shuka Deva, is also there.

He, in his boyhood, reflected deeply and knew the essential Truth through discrimination and unceasing meditation; yet his heart was not peaceful, he did not taste the nectar of tranquillity. The reason for this want of peace was that Shuka Deva failed to see that the Self alone is the highest Truth.

As a result of many sufferings, his heart grew totally indifferent to the pleasures of the world.

Shuka Deva, of purified heart, sitting in solitude on Mount Meru, asked the Sage Vyasa with great reverence: 'O Lord, be gracious enough to tell me at what time and in what place was born this illusion of the world, which deceives all people; and also how and when it will end?'

On hearing these words, the great Sage, the Truth-seeing one, explained to his son fully, the

philosophy of the rise and effacement of the world of illusion.

Hearing his father's words, Shuka Deva said to himself: 'The Sage has told me nothing new; I know all this philosophy already!' He did not give respectful consideration to his father's teachings.

The august Vyasa, who was versed in all the knowledge of the world, told his son that he could not add anything to what he had already said, and advised him to go to the Court of the Sage-king Janaka, and learn further from him.

Shuka Deva left the peaceful atmosphere of Mount Meru and came to the capital of King Janaka, and applied to the palace guard for an audience with the king.

The guard approached the wise sovereign and announced that Shuka Deva, son of the great Vyasa, was at the door.

The king thought that if he made the teachings easy to Shuka Deva, he might not value them, for people often do not value what they obtain without a sacrifice. He, therefore, said to the guard: 'Let him wait!'

He sent no reply to Shuka Deva for seven days, as he deemed it essential to test the strength of his desire to know, and also the moral discipline and indifference to the pleasures of the world of his would-be pupil.

After seven days, the king admitted Shuka Deva to the outer court of his palace—and took no further notice of him. Yet Shuka Deva remained unperturbed and unmindful of the want

of respect shown to him, the son of an august and world-renowned sage.

At last the king sent Shuka Deva to his private apartments, and surrounded him with all the royal luxuries. Many temptations were placed in the way of the young Brahmin.

The starvation of fourteen days followed by the luxuries of the royal palace made no impression on the mind of Shuka Deva, just as a raging gale does not move the mighty Himalayan peaks.

Undisturbed either by disrespect and hardship, or by the alluring pleasures of the palace, Shuka Deva waited, as he had been told to do.

The test being over, he was admitted to the royal presence. Being endowed with discrimination and self-control, he was respectful, cheerful and indifferent to the pleasure sense.

The king bowed and, showing great respect to the young Brahmin, addressed him thus :—

‘ Having completed all your duties in the world, what is it that you want, Sir ? ’

Shuka Deva deposited at the feet of the king the little gifts he had brought, and respectfully repeated the same question which he had asked his father. To his great surprise, the king gave him the same answer that holy Vyasa had given.

Hearing the Truth, Shuka Deva realised that his own deliberations had brought him to the same conclusions, and that both his father and the Vedanta Scriptures had taught the same.

'This illusion of the world-process, which creates the sense of bondage and suffering, is a product of desire-imagination, and subsides when the latter disappears. The Self, deluded by ignorance, imagines varieties of appearances. This is the conviction of the Knowers of Truth.

'But, Lord, I want peace; kindly establish me in unalterable peace, and make my mind free from doubts as to the Vedantic Truth.'

'What more can I teach you, O *Muni*? There is nothing else real in the universe, except the ever-tranquil *Atman*. It is bound by Its own thought and is liberated by Its own thought.

'Besides, you have conquered the pleasure-sense and have acquired the eye of discrimination. What more do you want? I am proud to-day that you, the son of the great Mahatma Vyasa, are my guest.

'As external pleasures do not attract you and you do not fall into the mire of attachment, you are free! Give up the idea that you are bound—and you are free! *That Thou Art*, O Shuka!'

Having heard these words of the king, the *Muni* Shuka Deva had a flash of the inner illumination and saw his Self as free from the seen and the conceived. He was free from grief, fear, agitation and activity, and was rooted in eternal Peace.

Walking like a true *Deva*, Lord of all, merged in the bliss of his nature, Shuka Deva returned to Mount Meru, and, remaining for one thousand years in *samaahi*, found Peace in release from

THE FOURTEENTH DISCOURSE

the body, like a lamp extinguished for want of oil.

Thus Shuka Deva, purity itself, ended his self-identification with the taint of the perceived and its cause, ignorance. Being without either virtue or vice, completely free from identification of the Self with the body, his *karma* having ended, he found eternal at-one-ment with the Self, as a drop of water merges in the sea."

THE FIFTEENTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

“ Take my advice, Rama, and strive to be an example of a great man in your deeds, enjoyments and liberality, and rely upon your unshakable endurance by bidding defiance to all your cares and fears.”

RAMA ASKED :

“ Tell me, venerable Sir, what is the deed which makes the greatest actor ? What constitutes the highest enjoyment, and tell me also what is the great liberality which you advise me to practise ? ”

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

“ These three virtues were explained long ago, by the God *Shiva*, Who bears the crescent moon upon His forehead, to the Ruler of the *Bhringis*, who was thereby released from all disease and disquiet.

Bhringi said to *Shiva* :

‘ Lord, I am overwhelmed with sorrow at the sight of the boisterous waves of this deep and dark world in which we have been buffeted so

long, without finding the calm and quiet harbour of Truth. Tell me, Lord, what is that certain truth and inward assurance whereon we may rely with confidence, and whereby we may find rest and repose in this shattered mansion of the world ?

The Lord Shiva replied :

‘ Always place your reliance in unshaken patience and neither care nor fear for anything else : strive to be foremost in your renunciation of all passion and activity.

He is said to be the greatest actor who performs deeds as they occur to him, whether joy-giving or otherwise, without any fear or desire for fruition.

He is said to play his part well who performs his duties without fuss or anxiety, and maintains his reserve and purity of heart without taint of egoism or envy.

He is said to perform his part well who is not affected by any person or thing, but regards all objects as a mere witness.

He is the greatest actor who looks at his own birth, life and death, and upon his rise and fall, in the same light, and who does not lose equanimity of mind under any circumstance whatever.

He is said to enjoy himself best who observes the conduct and behaviour of mankind as an unconcerned and indifferent spectator, and looks on, without choosing anything for himself.

He is called the most satisfied man who sustains all the ups and downs of fortune with equal fortitude, as the deep sea contains the boisterous waves in its fathomless depths.

He to whom salt and sugar are alike, and who remains unaltered both in happy and adverse circumstances—he is the best of enjoyers.

He is the best of renunciates who has given up thoughts of his life and death, of his pleasure and pain, and has firmly dismissed his merits and faults from his mind.

He is said to have made the greatest sacrifice who has sacrificed his own mind and endeavours at the shrine of self-abnegation.

Meditate always on the everlasting and immaculate Spirit that is without beginning and end. By thinking in this way, you yourself become immaculate and are absorbed in the self-same *Brahman*, where there is all peace and tranquillity.

Know the one undying *Brahman* as the soul and seed of the various productions that emanate from Him. It is His immensity which spreads throughout the whole of existence, as it is the endless sky which comprehends and manifests all things within itself.

It is not possible for anything at all, whether of positive or potential existence, to subsist without and apart from the universal *Essence*. Rest secure with this firm belief in your mind, and be free from all fears in this world.'

O most righteous Rama, look always to the inner soul within yourself, and perform all your

outer actions with the members of your body. By forsaking your sense of egoism and personality, and being thereby freed from all care and sorrow, you will attain supreme felicity."

RAMA SAID TO VASISHTHA :

"O all-knowing and all-holy Sage! What becomes of the essence of the soul, after one's egoism is lost in one's mind, and both of them are dissolved into nought?"

THE HOLY RISHI REPLIED :

"The purity of the soul appears vividly in the bright and placid countenance of a man, after his egoism and its accompanying faults are melted down in the mortified mind.

All the fetters of our passions and affections are cut asunder and fall away. Upon breaking the string of our desires, our anger becomes weakened and our ignorance wears out by degrees, our cupidity is lessened and our covetousness flies far away from us, our limbs become relaxed and our sorrow subsides to rest.

It is then that our cares fail to afflict us, and joys cease to elate us; we feel then a calm everywhere and a stillness in our heart.

Joy and grief may now and then overcast the countenance of the *gnani*,¹ as a cloud hides the face of the sky, but they cannot over-shadow his soul, which is bright as eternal day.

¹ *Gnani* : A knower of God ; an enlightened man.

He bears a calm and tranquil disposition, offending and opposing none; and therefore, loved and honoured by everyone, he remains retired and assiduous in his task, enjoying the sweet serenity of his soul at all times.

Accursed indeed is the man who is drowned in his own ignorance, who does not seek the salvation of his soul, which is obtainable by the light of reason and serves to save him from all difficulties of the world.

He who desires to obtain this longed-for felicity by overcoming the waves of his miserable incarnations in the vast ocean of this world, must always enquire of himself: 'What am I to be hereafter? What means this short-lived enjoyment here? What is this world? Whither is it all going?'

Let him follow a traditional Teacher, if he is fortunate enough to find one.

Discover the stream of the deep water of your consciousness, and fling yourself into it. Drive all external things from you, as hot and harmful sunbeams are driven from houses.

The one ocean of ignorance surrounds and overflows the world, as the salt sea girds and washes an island; and the distinctions of 'I' and 'mine' are waves in this salt sea of our error.

The emotions of the mind and its various feelings and passions are the multiform billows of this sea of ignorance; our egoism or selfishness is the great whirlpool into which the self-willed man is hurled of his own accord.

His love and hate are the two sharks that lay hold of him in their jaws, and drag him at last into the depths.

Go and plunge yourself into the calm sea of spiritual solitude, and wash your soul in the nectar of ambrosial meditation. Dive and dive deep in the depth of Unity, and fly from the salt waves of duality and the brackish water of diversity.

Know yourself verily as that one soul which is said to be diffused over all the world ; say what other thing is there except That, and beside you, that you should regret or lament ?

Adore the Lord God, the Author of the worlds, Who is always bountiful, and the bestower of all things.

The worship of God destroys all our sins and cuts all the knots and snares of the world.

Having overcome the dark gloom of ignorance, by force of the purity of your own nature, you may pursue the course of *Adhyatma Yoga*—yea, the blessed *Adhyatma Yoga*—through the loving service of a Teacher.

My words, O Rama-ji, are the words of holy Brahma Himself—and none hears them unless his *sattvika-karma*¹ of many previous incarnations, warrants it."

When the discourse ended, the whole assembly bowed low to the holy Teacher, Vasishtha, and said :

" JAI TO THEE ! JAI TO THEE !
O IMMORTAL SAGE ! "

¹ *Sattvika-karma* : The merit earned by good deeds.

THE SIXTEENTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

“O Rama, I again expound the essence of that wisdom which will lead you to Self-realisation. You cannot obtain the mood of this realisation without constant practice. Ignorance, which is long established, having lasted for many incarnations, has obtained a firm footing ; it appears as external objects as well as subjective experiences. *Atman* is beyond the senses. When the mind and the senses become inoperative, then alone real peace is experienced.

Ignorance has two aspects ; one is the superior aspect, and the other is the inferior.

Knowledge is born of ignorance, and it abolishes ignorance.¹ The ignorance which is subjective and which draws in the outgoing *vruttis*,² is the superior ; the ignorance which

¹ *Knowledge is born of ignorance and it abolishes ignorance* : A man dreams he is in a forest, being pursued by a tiger, causing him great fear ; but, on remembering he has a revolver with him, he shoots the tiger dead and awakes. The dream was an illusory projection of his own mind ; so was the revolver ; but the illusory revolver brought release from the illusory tiger. So is knowledge said to be born of ignorance and also abolished this ignorance.

When man is spiritually awakened from the illusory world of nescience, he is released completely from all fear, realising the identity of his Self with *Brahman*.

² *Vruttis* : A technical term in Vedanta for a modification of

seeks delight in the objective world, is the lower aspect of it. Destroy ignorance, O Rama !

Practice and perseverance lead to success. Whatever good one obtains is the fruit of the tree of long-continued practice. This ignorance is the result of the wrong thinking of many incarnations and so it appears strong, but when you work patiently for Self-realisation, then ignorance will end.¹

The heart is like a tree which is entwined by the parasitic creeper of ignorance. Cut down this creeper with the sword of knowledge, O Rama, and perform your normal duties in life. This is the way to happiness.

Be like King Janaka who, having known what was to be known, lived in society. Be firmly established in the knowledge of Self, in this deep-rooted conviction of Truth, like the Seers of old, who, though conscious of the internal passions of others, were themselves free from them."

RAMA SAID :

"O Master, kindly tell me the conviction which I must cherish in order to be above joys and sorrows."

the mind. An example of such a modification (*svikiti*) is the thought : "I am *Brahman*" which in time destroys the roots of superior nescience and produces Self-knowledge.

¹ *Ignorance will end*: The imagined snake, seen in what was really a piece of rope, was never born of an egg, and is therefore beginningless in time, but has an end when the reality of the rope is seen. So does ignorance come to an end when Reality is known and Self-realisation attained.

HOLY VASISHTHA REPLIED :

" Listen, O Rama, to this wisdom, the conviction of the knower of Truth. The whole spacious world that you apprehend, is the taintless *Brahman*, enjoying Its own glory. As the waves rising in the ocean are water, so all the objects that you see are *Brahman*. The enjoyer is *Brahman* ; the objects enjoyed are *Brahman*. The friend is *Brahman* and the foe is also That. It is eternally established in Its Self-existence. O Rama, those people who have this conviction are free from love and aversion, and are happy. Know, O Rama, that presence is *Brahman* and absence is also *Brahman*. There is nothing but *Brahman*, and those who have known this fact, they have neither attachment nor aversion.

Brahman knows *Brahman*, and is established in Its own Self. O Rama, *Brahman* is 'I AM' ; It is the inner Self. Death is *Brahman* ; the body is *Brahman*. *Brahman* dies and *Brahman* kills. As the snake is seen in the rope, so joys and woes are seen in *Brahman*. What the waves are to water, so is the world to *Brahman*. Those who are true Seers, see this ; but others, who have not yet known Truth, see differently. The knower sees God everywhere ; the ignorant sees the world in all its variety, and suffers as a child suffers when he imagines his shadow to be a ghost.

To the ignorant the world appears full of suffering, but to the wise it is all *Brahman*.

As the echo in the hills is one's own voice, as

in a dream one sees oneself beheaded, but in fact it is not so ; such is this world, O Rama.

Brahman is the substratum of all powers, and whatever It imagines is seen in actuality.

He who has attained perfect knowledge, sees the world as it is ; he is ageless and is his own light.

O Rama, he who meditates on the fact ' I am *Brahman*,' becomes *Brahman*.

Brahman is free from all thought, imagination or emotion. It is ever pure, immutable and peaceful. To him who knows the Truth comes the realisation :—

' I am *Brahman* ; I have no suffering and no joy ; I neither long for anything, nor do I renounce anything ; I am blue, I am yellow, I am white ; I am in grass, leaves, trees and flowers ; I am the hills, the streams, dales and peaks ; I am the essence of all. When all imagination and feelings are gone, then I am the transcendental Reality. The immutable, the nameless and the formless, am I : I am the Witness-Self ; I am the basis of all experience ; I am the light that makes experience possible.

' I am the man who has fallen in love with a young woman and who compares her beauty to the moon ; the consciousness which illumines the joy in the heart of a lover, am I. I am the taste in the dates. Gain and loss are the same to me. As the string bearing the beads remains hidden, so I am the Reality which is hidden in all beings.

I worship the *Atman* which is the essence of

living beings, the sweetness in the moon, and the splendour in the sun.

O Rama! Such is the conviction of the knower of Truth."

THE SEVENTEENTH DISCOURSE

HOLY VASISHTHA CONCLUDED :

“Now, Rama-ji, reflect like King Janaka upon the supreme Spirit in your own heart, and learn from the wise how to meditate.

As long as you continue to restrain your sense-organs from their objects, so long will the divine Spirit grace your inward soul with its presence. The sight of the supreme Spirit will remove the manifold prejudices of your mind, and will drive away all misery, pouring Itself down in bountiful showers before your eyes.

Neither pious acts, nor riches, nor friends, are of any use to men for their redemption from the miseries of life ; only their own striving will avail for the enlightenment of their souls.

They who rely on faith in their gods, and depend on them for the fulfilment of their present and future desires, are perverted in their understanding, and cannot be heirs to immortality.

The consciousness that ‘ This is I ’ is like the shadow of night and is dispelled by the rising of the sun of true knowledge. Think neither of the entity nor the non-entity of yourself or others. Preserve the tranquillity of your mind, by ignoring the thought of both positive and negative existence, and be rid of the sense of distinction between cause and effect.

Again, the fostering of a fondness for some things as good and a distaste for others as evil, is a disease of the mind, making only for uneasiness.

Be not attached to what you hold to be beautiful, nor repelled by what appears hateful to you; rid yourself of these antagonistic feelings and be even-minded, by concentrating on that One before Whom all things are alike and equally good.

Know your soul to be as a thread, passing through and supporting everything in existence like so many pearls on a necklace.

There are three causes for your approach to spiritual enlightenment. Firstly, your lack of belief in the existence of duality, then the brilliance of your intellectual light, obtained by the grace of God, and lastly the wide range of your knowledge derived through my instruction.

O Rama, meditate daily thus :

'I rule over the world in the form of Indra, and as a monk I command the monastery that has come down to me. I am both male and female ; I am both the youth and the maiden ; I am most ancient as regards my soul, and I am young as regards my body, which is born again and again and ever renewed. It is for pleasure that my *Atman* has stretched out the world, like a child who makes toys in play.

I am the fragrance of the flowers and the hue of their petals ; I am the form of all forms, and the perception of things perceptible.

Whatever moveable or immovable thing is in

this world, I am the innermost heart of it—but ever free from its desires.

As the primal element of moisture is diffused in nature in the various forms of water, so is my Spirit spread over all vegetation.

I enter as consciousness into the innermost heart of all things, and issue forth in the form of sensations, at my own will.

I have regained my boundless empire over all worlds, without seeking or asking for it, and without subduing them.

O vast, far-reaching Spirit of God, I bow down to Thee as my Self and find myself lost in Thee, as in the vast ocean of the universal deluge.

This temple of *Brahman*, the mundane world, is too small and straitened for me—as the eye of a needle is too small for an elephant to pass through!

I who am the unborn and uncreate Spirit, reign triumphantly over this transient world."

PRINCE RAMA THEN SAID :

"O alas, ignorance of the Spirit leads men to serve the dull body; it is thus that our ignorant brethren pamper their bodies for no lasting good.

The Lord is immanent in all, as fragrance and fluidity are inherent in flowers and water. Now that the holy Teacher, pleased with the sacrifice of my ego, has pointed out to me the way to Self-realisation, I have achieved the state of salvation.

I am now freed from the host of my feverish

passions by the downfall of the demon of ignorance and the disappearance of the goblin of my egoism

The falcon of my ignorance has flown from the cage of my body. I know not whither, breaking the cord of desires by which its feet were fast bound

I marvel to think what I have been all this time, while bound by my egoism in the chains of my personality

Like an extinguished fire, my mind is set at rest and released from the cares of the world. I am now freed from my affections and passions, and the attractions of the world, and also from my craving for them.

Through the disappearance of my inner darkness, and by the sight of the one great God in me and in all, I have crossed the impassable ocean of dangers and difficulties, and surmounted the intolerable evils of transmigration."

OM! OM! OM!

THE STORY OF QUEEN CHUDALA

CHAPTER I

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama, long long ago, in the age called *Dwapara*, there was a king who was righteous and benevolent, who abstained from doing harm to any living being, and who was loved by his subjects. His name was Shikhidhwaja, and his kingdom covered what is now Malwa in India. Once, in the time of Spring when the woods were at their best, he went out hunting. In the beautiful surroundings the thought of having a wife crossed his mind.

His ministers arranged his marriage with the daughter of another king. She was learned, benevolent and a great Yogini. Her name was Chudala. She was a perfect wife and of extremely comely appearance.

The King and Queen lived happily like Vishnu and Lakshmi, each loving the other. Just as out of a little hole in a big vessel, the water gradually escapes, so the couple aged. The Queen, as a consequence of her great charity and devotion to God, came to harbour feelings of the unreality of the world, and she converted the King to her view.

They thought:—The world is unreal, and

the thirst for enjoyment is never permanently quenched. Youth and power are momentary, like the flash of lightning. Our youth has run out like water through our hands. The mind has suffering as its inseparable companion. Just as a cat runs after a piece of meat, so does suffering follow our joys and pleasures. The body is claimed by death like a ripe mango falling from the branch of a tree. Whatever we may think, we cannot keep youth or the body for ever. We must do something to terminate the disease of the world-process. There is nothing except knowledge of *Brahman* that can bring permanent satisfaction.

Having thus deliberated, the King and Queen approached the Mahatmas who had realised *Brahman*, who had crossed the river of the world-process, and were embodiments of truth and wisdom. They placed their gifts with reverence before a Rishi and began to do service to him. When the Rishi told them about *Atman*, they listened with full attention and reverence. They heard that *Atman* is ever pure, infinite and bliss-absolute, and that to know it is to overcome sufferings for ever.

The Queen, whose good *karma* had purified her mind, grasped the truth and asked herself:— 'What am I? What is the world? What is its origin?' She soon came to the following conclusion:—

I cannot be the body, because it is inert while I am conscious. The body moves by the power of the senses. I am not the senses, as they are

not self-conscious. Neither the mind which moves the senses, nor the discriminative faculty is self-conscious. I must therefore, by reason of my self-consciousness, be different from them.

The ego is not myself, because it is lit by the light of the mind. The mind has no permanent consciousness, while I, as *Atman*, am Consciousness Itself. My Self is Truth, it is a sun that is in a state of eternal dawn. How wonderful is my Self! It is bliss-absolute. I have found my true state which is indestructible and infinite.

Like the autumn sky which is pure and unspotted by clouds, I am taintless, I am ever free from the fever of affection and aversion. I am free from desires or fluctuations of awareness. I am free from 'I' and 'thou'. Being free from identification with the mind, I am ever undisturbed and secondless. There is no possibility of modifications in me.

The great Yogis have called the eternal principle *Brahman*. This Self manifests itself as the mind and the world, yet there is no change in its original nature. As the rocks, stones and pebbles on a mountain are nothing but the mountain, so the perceptible world is just *Atman*. A phantom city has no real existence of its own, nor has the world. The realised yogi lives in unity, while the ignorant one is in duality.

A child makes forms of clay, and calls them an elephant, a cow, a horse, a king, but in fact they are nothing but clay. Ignorance lends many colours to the colourless Reality, *Atman*. Now I know clearly the basic Consciousness.'

Chudala realised her Self as unburnable, impenetrable, uncompounded, ever-pure. She declared moreover :—‘ I have neither birth nor death in me. The world appears by virtue of Consciousness ; the *devas*, and the moving and unmoving things, are all *Atman*. As the waves, bubbles and foam are not different from the sea, so there is nothing different from *Atman*. They have no self-existence, which *Atman* alone has. ‘ I-ness ’ has never at any time appeared in me. Having realised this Truth, I will wander about freely in the world, enlightening others.’ ”

HOLY VASISHTHA CONTINUED :

“ O Rama-ji, Chudala was now free from the thirst for pleasure, and had neither suffering nor fear. She realised that there was nothing left for her to know. She enjoyed eternal *Samadhi*, and was established in the bliss that abides. No words can describe the bliss of the Queen.

The King saw the Queen in this state of bliss, radiating peace, and he was struck with wonder. He said : ‘ Beloved, I see that once more you have become youthful, and methinks you have experienced heavenly joy. Perhaps some *deva* has given you nectar to drink which has made you immortal, or some great yogi has given you his blessings. The modes of your mind are saturated with the essence of wisdom, and you have obtained something which is greater than the rulership of the three worlds. You are at peace and I do not see any desire or passion in you.’

Chudala replied :—' O Sovereign, I have obtained that blessed state which is beyond the perishable and the perceptible, in which there is a complete absence of duality. I am enjoying the absence of enjoyments, which Self-realisation has brought me. Having risen above the royal pleasures, I am established in Self-bliss, and am free from affection and aversion. I know now for certain, O King, that whatever is perceived or conceived is only a dream and unreal ; and the state of normality which I have discovered is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, and it is free from the taint of egoity ; it is the substratum of all, Self of all, essence of all. This is the nectar I have drunk, which has given me the sense of immortality, and has rid me of fear for ever.' "

VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama-ji, the King did not understand the meaning of the Queen's statement and laughed at this strange wisdom, ridiculing it.

He said : ' Beloved, there is no sense in what you say, and I do not recognise your point of view. You call the perceptible unreal, and the imperceptible real. No man can accept your statement, as there is no sense in it. One professing such strange wisdom does not command respect. You say that you are happy, having renounced the royal pleasures. Does this not sound like the statement of an insane person ? What pleasure can there be beyond the reach of

the senses? Wealth, youth, merriment, laughter, health, the company of the youthful: all this is pleasure. I think you have become very stupid, thinking you are wise. You say you are *Brahman*. Who will believe this nonsense? These abnormal ideas do not become a Queen, and still less this foolish attitude.'

Having said this, the King got up and left the chamber. The time being noon, he went to his bath.

Queen Chudala wondered at the attitude of the King and was sorry for his want of enlightenment. She did not speak to him again of this divine wisdom, and lived in the palace in the same way as before."

CHAPTER II

"The Queen Chudala was an expert in both the Yogic powers and in Self-realisation. She rose to the middle region and saw the great beings who live there—the *devas*, the nymphs and other celestial beings. Then she descended and went to the palace where the King was sleeping. The King was not conscious of the presence of the Queen. He got up at sunrise and, after his ablutions, went to the chamber of worship where he prayed and meditated.

The Queen began to teach the King, gradually and indirectly, and she asked the pundits to explain to him that the world is a mere dream and one long illness, for which Self-realisation is the only cure. In spite of her efforts and those of the pundits, the King did not have enlightenment and still remained without true happiness."

RAMA SAID :

"O holy Master, the Queen was a great yogini, and had also realised God; the pundits were learned and pious; so I do not understand why the King remained in ignorance, in spite of their teaching. The King was not dull, yet although he had the example of a God-realised Queen he did not attain God-realisation."

VASISHTHA REPLIED :

"As a thread does not pass through an unbored pearl, so the teachings of the Queen did not influence the heart of the King. O Rama-ji, unless the pupil himself meditates and reflects and puts the teaching into practice with interest and perseverance, even the words of *Brahma* Himself fall flat on his ears. The reason is that *Atman* knows Itself and is not the object of reason or the senses."

RAMA SAID :

"O Lord, if *Atman* knows Itself and is not influenced by any external agency, then what is the use of a *Guru*, *Sat-Sangs*, or the *Yoga* ?"

VASISHTHA EXPLAINED :

"O Rama-ji, the *guru* and the scriptures show the way and give the method. They point out to the pupil :—'Thy real self is *Atman*', but they cannot transmit their God-realisation to him. The pupil himself has to do the rest. The *guru* can neither think nor practise for the pupil. One can point out the rising moon to another who has eyes, and he can see the moon ; but if the person is short-sighted he cannot see it. In the same way, the *guru* and the scriptures give the spiritual Truth to the pupil, but the pupil himself has to apply reflection and meditation and realise what they have taught him.

O Rama-ji, *Atman* is not an object of the senses

or the mind. If you say to me :—' You also teach through the senses. Why do you do so when you know that *Atman* is not the object of the senses? ' the reply to this objection is : ' Rama-ji, forget the senses and the mind : go to their cause and you will know *Atman*. Here is an illustration. There was a merchant who lived in a certain city. He was wealthy but a miser. He did not share his wealth with the needy nor dispense it to Brahmins and Yogis. He wanted to amass more and more. In the end he desired to possess the jewel called Chintamani, which is of incalculable value.

He came to a heap of rubbish and, expecting to find the jewel, searched for it the whole day. In the evening he found a shell. He thought there might be something more there, so he came every day and searched. He found another shell and yet another. After many years' search, he found the jewel Chintamani.

O Rama-ji, the teachings of the Guru—*Tat Twam Asi*, and *Aham Brahmasmi*—are like those shells. As the finding of the shells led to the discovery of Chintamani, so the teachings of the Guru lead to God-realisation."

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama-ji, leaving the Queen Chudala, the King went to the temple to worship. The words of wisdom he had heard from her took effect and thoughts of passionlessness and renunciation invaded his heart. He thought : ' I have passed so many years of my life in enjoying pleasure,

but still I am not satisfied ; the enjoyment of pleasure has always been followed by suffering. I see now that the world and its joys are illusory.'

The King gave away gold, land, cows, houses and many other things in charity. He gave gifts to the Brahmins and large sums to the poor.

The Queen asked the family priests to teach the King the doctrine of the unreality of the world, and to point out to him that self-realisation is the only source of happiness, and the only means of terminating the cycle of birth and death.

When the King heard this truth from the Brahmins, he considered how he could become free from sufferings. He decided to go on pilgrimage to the holy places. He bathed in the sacred rivers, giving charity to the Brahmins and the needy, and saw many *rishis* and perfected beings.

He returned from his pilgrimage and, entering the chamber of the Queen, addressed her thus : ' O sweet Chudala, I have decided to go to the forest to do penance. All the joys of the world seem to me to be sufferings in one form or another, the kingdom appears to be futile and no better than a wilderness.'

The Queen replied : ' O King, this is not the moment for you to become a hermit ; you are still young and must enjoy the pleasures of the kingdom. As the flowers of Spring cease to be beautiful in winter, so when we grow old we will retire to the forest and will be happy there. When our hair grows grey like the grey flowers

of the woods, then it will become us to live in the forests as hermits.'

The King did not see the wisdom of the Queen's words, and remained fixed in passionlessness. His pilgrimages and the charity done by him had purified his heart and crowned it with feelings of the unreality of the world; but as the water-lily remains without its full beauty in the absence of the moonlight, so the King could not find satisfaction and peace, being without the knowledge of Truth.

He said: 'O Queen, let me renounce the kingdom and retire to the forest. Perhaps you are wondering who will serve me while I am away from my palaces and servants? I assure you, O Queen, the earth will serve me, the vistas of tall trees will be my companions, the fawns and birds will be my children, the calm atmosphere of the silent woods will be my covering, the flowers will serve me as ornaments.'

Before the dawn the King left the palace, and the Queen and her maids-in-waiting followed him. All passed the night in the thick forest. At midnight the King woke and finding his Queen and her companions asleep in perfect oblivion, he got up and, leaving them, set out alone. He turned once towards his capital and said: 'Farewell, O royal riches and joys! Adieu, O friends and companions!'

He walked on and on with hurried steps, through the thick forest, hearing the roaring of lions and hissing of snakes. When the sun rose, he took a bath in the cool and refreshing water

of a mountain stream, and offered his morning prayer. He plucked a few ripe fruits and ate them. Fearing discovery by his subjects, he hurried on, crossing valleys, scaling hills, and fording swift-flowing streams. Having travelled on and on for twelve days, Shikhihwaja reached the foot of the Mandarachal mountain.

He selected a place to live in, and constructed a hut for himself from leaves and the branches of trees. He collected fruits and flowers, and placed them before the altar in his small room.

He got up daily before sunrise and, after his ablutions, repeated his *mantram* with full concentration and faith until mid-day. Then, taking his second bath, he worshipped God and offered fruits and flowers to Him. He took a simple meal of wild fruits and berries in the *third part of the day and soon afterwards began saying his mantram*. In the evening, he offered prayers to God, and after sunset again began his *mantram*, which he repeated till midnight."

CHAPTER III

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

"O Rama-ji, you have heard about the daily life of the King; hear now about the Queen.

When she found that the King had left her in the small hours of the night, she was distressed and said to her maids: 'The King has entered the dangerous forest. How sad we shall be, left without our sovereign and Lord!'

The Queen exercised her yogic powers and rose into the air. She saw the King travelling onward through the deep forest and reflected on what his *karma* had in store for him in the future. She discovered that her own *karma* warranted her meeting the King, but that he was not ripe to receive the divine truth, and that it was desirable for him to undergo the experience of forest life.

She returned to the Palace and slept in perfect peace in her own chamber. In the morning she told the Prime Minister that the King had gone away on private business, and was expected to be absent from the capital for some time. She gave him instructions for carrying on the administration.

She ruled the kingdom well for eight years, and added to the peace and happiness of her subjects. As a gardener looks after a lotus field

with care and affection, so did the Queen look after her subjects.

Meanwhile, the King devoted his time to meditation, holy study and repetition of his *mantram*. He became weak in body but strong in spirit. At length, the Queen knew that the King was ripe to receive the higher spiritual Truth, his heart having been purified, and his vanity, ambition and egoism subdued. She rose into the upper regions and walked in the garden of Indra, enjoying the beauty of the celestial flowers, and listening to the songs of the birds of multi-coloured plumage.

Then she crossed the cloud barrier, the lightning and the fogs. She flew over the high mountains, battling through tempests and looking down on the huts of the sages, perched below on the green slopes amidst playing rills. Reaching the Mandarachal Mountain, she descended and sitting on a crystal rock, entered *Samadhi*. She saw the King living in a solitary cave, meditating and engaged in the yogic practices, but still without self-realisation, without true enlightenment and peace.

She was eager to lead him to the knowledge of Truth, but she knew that it would not be expedient to teach him in her present form; he would regard her as his wife, and might not listen to her with attention. So she transformed herself into a *Brahmachari*. As the wave, abandoning one form, adopts another, so the Queen became a young *Brahmachari*, and began to walk a foot above the earth. As a *Brahmachari*,

holding a water-vessel in one hand and a rosary of rudraksha seeds in the other, calm in appearance, his forehead painted with ashes and the white sacred thread thrown across his shoulders, she appeared before the King.

The King got up on seeing the Brahmachari, bowed to him, offering flowers and fruits, and asked him to take his seat under a shady tree. He said: 'This day has indeed brought good fortune to me, that I see you in my little hut. Tell me, O son of a *deva*, what brings you here?'

The Brahmachari replied: 'O King, I am on a long pilgrimage, in the course of which I have seen many beautiful rivers, hills, flowers and trees, but I have not seen anyone filled with purer emotion than yourself. You have performed great penances and spiritual exercises and conquered your lower self. I therefore bow to you. But tell me, O King, have you done anything for your Self-realisation?'

The King took a garland of flowers which he had kept for the worship of his *deva*, and put it round the neck of the Brahmachari, and offered him worship.

He said: 'It is rare to meet a holy man like you, O Brahmachari. I know that the offering of heartfelt hospitality to an uninvited guest is better than the worship of a *deva*. O Brahmachari, how charming is your bodily form; its grace and beauty remind me so much of my wife, who was very much like you. But you are a Brahmachari, devoted to *Yoga*, and it is

not meet to say that you are like the Queen. Tell me, holy Brahmachari, whose son you are, and with what object you have visited me, and what is your destination ?'

The Brahmachari said : ' O King, once upon a time, the divine sage, Narada, visited the Valley of the Sumeru, which is the permanent home of Spring. Flowers, tender leaves, chattering rills and graceful birds inhabit this valley. Many Brahmins engaged in meditation live there in their huts. The divine sage Narada was pleased to see this spot which is watered by the holy Ganges, and is accessible only to holy men. Narada sat down and entered into *Samadhi* and remained in that blessed state. When he descended from the heights of *Samadhi*, he heard the tinkle of a woman's jewellery. He was filled with astonishment and looked about to find the source of the sound. He came to the smiling stream of the Ganges, flowing onward like molten silver, and saw the celestial nymph Urvashi bathing in the sacred river with her holy companions. His eyes fell on their nude figures; he lost his discrimination and his mind was clouded by pleasure-sense.'

The King said : ' O Brahmachari, Narada is a great sage, how is it that even his mind was disturbed by the sight of the nude nymphs ?'

The Brahmachari said : ' O King, as long as the body endures, it functions according to its nature in the case of both the ignorant and the sage ; but the difference between the two is that

the wise man is not joyful when the sensations of pleasure arise in his body, and he is not subject to pain when sufferings invade his mind, while the ignorant man is a pendulum, swinging between a smile and a tear. The ignorant man is like a piece of white cloth which is easily dyed to any colour, while the wise man is as a sheet of wax which cannot be touched by colour, and on which no drop of the water of pleasure or pain can remain. The *antahkarana*¹ of the wise is not touched either by pleasure or pain. The ignorant sees somewhere pleasure and somewhere pain; but the wise sees all as a reflection of the great underlying *Atman*, and consequently he is not bound.

O King, desire is the mother of all motion. The original disturbance in the Intelligence Absolute has become the world. O King, when the conditioned consciousness (*Jiva*) stays in the *Kundalini*² and identifies itself with the senses and emotions, then it suffers and enjoys according to the reflections created in them. But when by the power of knowledge it realises its separateness from them, then it sees itself as Bliss Absolute. When it knows: 'There is no action in me, and I am not the body,' then it becomes passionless and blissful. As on a burnt tree there are neither leaves nor branches, so

¹ *Antahkarana*: The psyche, or inner organ of man, comprising the intellect, mind, memory, and sense of egoity.

² *Kundalini*: The cosmic vital energy, confined in the body of man, is symbolised as a coiled serpent, sleeping at the base of the spinal cord, from whence it can be aroused through yogic practices, to energise the psychic centres of the body.

when the soul is freed from the ignorance of passion-desires, it is all bliss.'

The King said: 'O blessed Brahmachari-ji, your words are so full of wisdom and productive of peace that I can never have too much of them. Now be kind enough to tell me how you were born?'

The Brahmachari said: 'O King, Narada gave birth to me in a miraculous way. I was not born of a woman, but was created by the divine Sage by the power of a holy *mantram*. When I was born, Narada took me to his father, who lavished affection on me and blessed me, saying: "O child, may you know *Brahman*!" Narada, the divine Sage, is my father, and I am called Kumbha.'

The King said: 'O *deva*, you look all-wise; your words betray your high state.'

CHAPTER IV

"The Brahmachari said: 'O King, I have told you what you asked, now tell me who you are, and what you are doing here?'

The King replied: 'It is as a result of much excellent *karma*, such as charity to learned Brahmins and the poor, sacrifices and worship of the Lord that one becomes fortunate enough to meet a sage like yourself.'

Kumbha interrupted him, saying: 'O King, enough, enough of such praise! Please tell me about yourself.'

The King said: 'My name is Shikhidhwaja. I have surrendered my kingdom because I found it full of suffering and imperfections, causes of birth and death. Now I am in this forest surrounded by the beauty of nature. You know all about me, I am sure of it; still, as you have asked me, I am telling you this. I pray and meditate three times a day, and say my *mantram* with faith. But I have not acquired the inner peace which abides. I have been on many pilgrimages, still I know no peace. I beg of you to enlighten me so that I may have the peace which endures for ever.'

The Brahmachari said:—'You gave up your kingdom and are now living in this hut, engaged in austerities. Once you called the kingdom

yours, now you call the hut yours. What is the difference of possession? As the worm of the mind lives in the mud, though it moves about from one muddy leaf to another, so do you; having given up one object, you have acquired another.

You do not know why you renounced the world. Before, you were surrounded by the luxury of the palace, and you are now surrounded by flowers, deerskin and rosary. They do not give the real peace. Awaken to your true Self and then you will have peace. Once I asked my father, Narada-ji: "Please tell me whether knowledge is superior to action." He replied: "Knowledge leads to perfect bliss; still, rituals are good for the ignorant. If a man does not perform rituals such as worship, charity, and service of the Brahmins, he will do sinful acts and go to darker incarnations. Action does not lead to peace, only knowledge does so."

O King, I wonder why you have fallen into this pond of ignorance. Before, you lived in a palace, now, in a hut; the result of both is the same. A change of environment has no spiritual merit. You are still ignorant. As long as a man feels he is a doer, he is in ignorance. Be free from all desires and actions and awaken to your real nature. To be desireless is to be free. Expectations constitute bondage. To meditate on *Atman*—"I am *Brahman*"—to have no other desire, and to be firmly established in Absolute Consciousness, is the sole object of true knowledge; it alone is worthy of being known. O

King, you should know your own Self. In what a whirlpool of ignorance you have fallen ! Without a knowledge of Self, there is no peace either in this world or in the one to come. As a tree stands unshaken in the absence of the wind, so is the soul peaceful when free from expectations.'

The King exclaimed : ' O Brahmachari-ji, you are my father, you are my *guru*, you have opened my eyes to a great truth ! I can see that desires have caused me sufferings. I feel I am like a dried-up tree-trunk. Be good enough, O *Guru Bhagwan*, to tell me how to acquire peace.'

The Brahmachari replied : 'After renouncing the world, you ought to have gone to a *Sat-Sang* of pious and learned Brahmins, and asked them : "What is bondage ? What is liberation ? What am I ? What is the world ? How is the world born and how does it end ?" Avoiding *Sat-Sangs* and the proximity of holy Brahmins, you have become like a tree-trunk. I advise you to go to *Sat-Sangs* and to give up the memory of past joys and future expectations. So have I heard from my father.'

The King said : ' O *rishi*, I acknowledge you as my *guru*. Please arrange *Sat-Sangs* for me and teach me the way to final freedom which is perfection.'

The Brahmachari answered : 'I will teach you, O King, but the teachings will not fructify if you do not pay full attention, and nurture them in the deepest corner of your heart. A crow sitting on the roof hears the Truth given in a *Sat-Sang*, but it still remains a crow. Hear the

Truth and assimilate it. Let your heart and mind be coloured by the Truth that you hear.'

Shikhidhwaja said :—' Lord, I will obey your commands. As I have followed the injunctions of the Scriptures regarding the practice of rituals, so will I follow your holy commands.'

Kumbha said : ' O King, know well without any mental reservations, that the teachings I give you are for your greatest good. As all that a wise father says to his son is for his good, so know well that what I am going to teach you is for your well-being. Have strong faith that this ancient and holy Truth will give you the highest prize—liberation.

Hear with faith and full attention; hear intelligently and with devotion.' "

CHAPTER V

"The Brahmachari continued: 'O King, what have you renounced? The kingdom was not yours; the women and the palaces were not yours. Besides, the fact that you have renounced them has not made any difference to their nature. They are to-day exactly as they were when you renounced them. The same thing is true in respect of the elephants, horses and gardens, said to have been renounced by you. O King, you have not renounced all. Give up what is yours, then it will be true renunciation.'

On hearing the remarks of the sage, the King murmured to himself: 'This forest is mine, these flowers and books are mine, I will renounce them.'

He said to the holy *Rishi*: 'Sir, I renounce this forest, these flowers and books which are mine. Will not this complete my renunciation?'

Kumbha replied: 'O King, the forest and flowers existed long before you; they are not yours. Give up what belongs to you, and you will be happy.'

Having heard this the King said:—'Holy Sage, this hut, this water-vessel, this rosary are mine, and to complete my renunciation I will give them up.'

Kumbha rejoined: 'O King, the hut belongs

to the mud and the wood of which it is made, and so do the other things. What right have you to give up what does not belong to you ? ’

The King offered to renounce his blankets and utensils, but the Brahmachari pointed out that they too did not belong to him.

The King got up and, collecting a few pieces of dry wood, made a fire into which he threw his staff, saying : “ Farewell, dear companion, you have been so long with me, and I thank you for your companionship.” Then he threw the deer-skin and the rosary into the fire with similar words of farewell.

The wind blew violently, and the King, standing mute and unattached, saw these objects reduced to ashes in the silence of the forest.

When the King saw all his possessions in ashes, he thought he would be happy, as he was free from property, attachment and aversion. He said : “ My-ness is at the root of evil and now there is nothing left which I may call mine ; I have acquired happiness and truth ; now I am perfect ; I have come out victorious.”

Addressing the Brahmachari Kumbha, he said : ‘ O son of a *deva*, now space is my dress, the earth is my bed, the breezes fan me and the clouds bathe me. Is not my renunciation complete ? ’

‘ Not yet, not yet,’ declared the Brahmachari, ‘ Give up what belongs to you ! ’

The King asked : ‘ Is not my renunciation complete ? No, no, I see my body belongs to me, and I am going to throw myself from yonder

rock.' So saying, he ran towards the rock to execute his intention. The Brahmachari interrupted and said: 'O King, the body is the result of much good *karma*. Do not lose it! Besides, no blame is ever attached to the body. When flowers and fruit fall from a tree in a strong wind, nobody blames the tree for the loss. O King, renounce the ego which rules the body. As the wind is the mover of the waters of the sea, so the mover of the body is the ego.'

'Holy Sage, enlighten me further on this mystery. I never heard of this in the teachings of the *Hatha-Yoga*.'

Kumbha said: 'O King, *bhuta* and *prana*,¹ are at the root of the body; renounce them! A snake without poison is harmless. Whatever is seen in the objective world is all a materialisation of the mind. The mind is the principle of diversity. *Atman* is the Essence, which is neither one nor many. The root-cause of confusion and suffering is the mind. Renounce it, O King, and you will be a king indeed. Renunciation of material things does not matter at all. The mind is born and it reincarnates. As long as *Atman* does not detach itself from the mind, sufferings continue in one form or another. This is the only way to immortality. As the field is the ground for the germination of plants and beans, so is the mind the cause of birth and

¹ *Bhuta and Prana*: The material elements of which all the physical world is composed are called *bhutas*; the vital force, manifest in all living beings, is called *prana* meaning literally the 'life-breath'.

CHAPTER VI

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" O Rama-ji, when the Brahmachari Kumbha pointed out that renunciation of the mind was true renunciation, the King observed : ' O holy One, I understand now that the mind is a monkey jumping about on the branches of the tree of the world. Kindly tell me how to control it? '

Kumbha said : ' O King, it is very easy to control the mind, yet only one who knows the truth can do so. '

' How, how, O holy one ? I find it as hard to control as children find it difficult to catch hold of a big fish. '

Kumbha replied : ' O King, know first the nature of the mind. It is made up of desires, past impressions and memories. Give up desires and know the sweet memories as unreal, and the mind will subside. '

The King remarked with animation : ' Lord, the mind is a flower and its fragrance is the world. The body is a straw, and the mind is the wind that moves it. Please teach me further. '

Kumbha continued : ' Consciousness is the ever pure and untainted field. Ego is the seed in it ; it is also called the mind, and it is unreal. Motion in the ego assumes the form of the body and the senses. The feeling of certitude in this

form is the reason. It is the feeling "I am"; *Jiva* is this limited ego. This is the seed of the tree of the world-process; joys and sorrows are its sweet and bitter fruit. To destroy the ego—"I am"—is to cut the root of the tree of the world-process.

The King was delighted to know this great secret and, wishing to hear further, he said: 'Holy Brahmachari, I see that both the subjective and the objective world have their roots in the little ego. Its extension is Time-Space. As the peaceful sea is ruffled into waves by the action of the wind, so the ever-peaceful *Atman* is disturbed by the rise of the false ego. To destroy it is to destroy the world-process. How wonderful is this knowledge! How ignorant was I that I turned to the physical *Yoga*! I have heard of the teaching of the fire and the fuel, will you be kind enough to instruct me in it? If I had the kingdom, I would give it to you, O Lord!'

Kumbha taught him further: 'O King, know: "What am I? What is the world?" This enquiry into truth is a fire. Burn up the false "I" which identifies itself with the body in the fire of enquiry. When this is accomplished, then the "I" remains in *Atman*. Now tell me, O King, what I have taught you.'

The King replied: 'Holy *Rishi*, I know this; I am neither the earth, nor the hills, nor space nor time. The body made up of blood, skin and bones, am I not. I am not the mind nor the reason. Ego am I not. I am free from all. But,

holy Master, I do not know how and when this taint of egoity came to be associated with me. I am yet unable to rid my *Atman* of it ; it is so tenacious.'

Kumbha said : ' O King, just give up this limited ego. It is no use asking the why and how of it. By renouncing it you will remain pure Consciousness.'

The King said : ' O Blessed Teacher, I know that by nature I am *Atman* and my *Atman* is the *Atman* of all ; that I am Bliss, and all else is illumined by me. But I do not know how the taint of ego came to soil me. I am as yet unable to annihilate it in practice. I also know that the seed of the world is my mind, and that the mind has its origin in the ego. By your kind instruction, I know that my real nature is *Atman*, and I know that I am free from the sense of "I" and "thou". But I am not yet finally free from the ego. Sometimes I think I am ; but then again it invades me and I feel I am Shikhidhwaja, and then I am worldly. Kindly instruct me how to annihilate it.'

Kumbha said : ' O King, there is no effect without a cause. If you ever see an effect without a cause, then know it to be an illusion, something unreal. The whole universe from *Ishwara*¹ to a piece of wood is the creation of thought, and therefore it is an illusion. I assure you from my personal, spiritual experience that the world is no other than a will-o'-the-wisp, the silver in mother-of-pearl. The body appears in *Atman*

¹ *Ishwara* : The Lord in His aspect of Creator of the Universe

like a snake in a rope, a mere illusion. As a dream is nought but an illusion, so is the universe. When this illusion leaves you, you will see only *Atman*. O King, what is true in the case of your body is true in the case of *Ishwara*; both are the creations of illusion.'

The King spoke reflectively: 'I see, I see, O great *Rishi*! All the universe is an illusion. I have just awakened, and I see that all is in reality *Atman*. Anything apprehended is unreal; *Atman* alone is real. This is my conviction. The cause of *Ishwara* is *Brahman*, Which is indestructible and real. It is my *Atman*.'

Kumbha said: 'O King, cause and effect exist in duality and are unreal; any object which is conditioned in time, space and causation must be unreal and transient; all mutability is unreality. O King, *Atman* is secondless; it is neither one nor more than one; it is neither subject nor object; its nature is immutability; it is the Reality underlying time and space. The cause-effect relationship exists in duality. *Atman* is neither the one nor the other; it is Consciousness Absolute.

As a figure of snow melts under the warmth of the sun, so, O King, does your ignorance melt under this knowledge. You will verify my own spiritual experience that all is *Atman*. First be firmly rooted in your *Atmic* nature and see that all from *Ishwara* to a worm is *Atman*. Everything that is apprehended is *Atman*.'

The King said: 'O holy *Rishi*, by your

kindness I am now awake, and I know that I am taintless. I bow to my own Self in reverence. Tell me, O holy *Rishi*, why do you say that *Ishwara* is causeless? *Atman*, Who is infinite, unmanifest, indestructible and secondless, is the cause of *Ishwara*.'

Kumbha replied: 'O King, you say that *Atman* is infinite. Well, that which is infinite must be unconditioned by time and space. Absence of duality in *Atman* renders it incapable of being a cause. A cause exists both before and after the effect, as clay does in respect of the jar. But in *Atman* there is neither beginning nor end. Besides, a cause must modify or change itself to produce an effect. *Atman* being All and Absolute is free from the possibility of change or modification. *Atman* is indestructible and immutable. It has never fallen from its nature. As there is no duality in *Atman*, so it is neither subject nor object. Nor is there any action in it. It is eternally pure like the blue sky or space, O King, and it is your own nature.'

The King, on hearing this grand truth, declared: 'Most wonderful, most marvellous! I see my *Atman* is secondless, It is neither a cause nor an effect. It is Knowledge Absolute. I am free from both knowledge and ignorance. I am *Nirvana*! Salutations to myself!'"

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID:

"Having heard the words of wisdom from Kumbha Muni, King Shikhidhwaja entered into *Nirvana* and remained in *Samadhi* for one and

a-half hours, like a flame unmolested by the breeze.

Kumbha woke him to the body-consciousness and said : ' What have you to do with trance or normal consciousness? You are *Atman*, absolute. As a jewel in a sealed casket does not reveal its light externally, but its brilliance becomes visible when it is removed from the casket, so you have now emerged from the casket of ignorance, and the splendour of your realisation is shining forth. Now live in peace and freedom; no taint will touch you.' "

CHAPTER VII

HOLY VASISTHHA SAID :

" O Rama-ji, having heard these words of great wisdom, the King was filled with peace.

He said : ' O great Brahmachari, I have one more question to ask : *Atman* is Knowledge Absolute and eternally pure. How does this trio of the knower, knowing and the known arise in it ? '

Kumbha smiled and said : ' O King, all movable and immovable, external and internal objects appear only until the end of the world-period. Then *Atman* alone remains ; then there is neither light nor darkness. *Atman* is neither real nor unreal ; it is ever-luminous. As the light of a gem appears as its rays, so the light of *Atman* appears as the world ; the forms are an illusion.

Know well, O King, that neither " I " nor " Thou " arises in *Atman*, which is eternal peace. It is Knowledge Absolute and Bliss Absolute.

Live established in the *Atman* which is minuter than the minutest, and greater than the greatest. Space is contained in Him. The universe is in Him like a tiny straw in a big field. When *Atman* becomes extrovert, the universe appears as a partial materialisation of His light. Wind has the quality of motion, and also of

motionlessness. When the wind moves it is felt, but when it is motionless it is not apprehended. In the same way, when *Atman* manifests, the universe is apprehended as its manifestation ; but when it withdraws its creation, it is not experienced. *Atman* is Existence Absolute, and the universe is in existence. When the universe is seen correctly, it is *Atman* and all bliss, but when it is seen incorrectly, it appears as the world, full of sufferings. He whose mind has world-cognition suffers, but to him whose mind has *Atman*-cognition, the world is a garden of bliss.

Atman means Self, and the one who sees the world as his own Self is free from suffering. O King, the world exists only in your thought and feeling, and you experience joy or pain according to your own mind which is projected as the world. For him who harbours no poisonous thought and feeling, there is no poison, while to the one who thinks poisonous thoughts, even nectar becomes poison.

The knower knows that the world is merely an expression of his thought-feeling, and he does not experience suffering ; but the ignorant, in spite of wealth and luxury is ever suffering.

Know the great secret, O King—the mind and feelings are but other names for *Atman*. As space is also called the void, so *Atman* is called the mind, intelligence and ego. As bangles, rings and necklaces of gold are only gold, so all is *Atman*.

Experience and feelings are the rays of *Atman*.

The mind has created the world in *Atman*. The beginning is *Atman*, the middle is *Atman*, and the end is *Atman*. What appears other than *Atman* is mere illusion.

Know, O King, that Time-Space is an illusion, and be blissful. Time-Space is perceived by the senses and the mind, but when it is perceived without these modifications, it is *Atman*.

O King, see *Brahman*, see Perfection, and you will be *Brahman* and Perfection. As Space exists in its own nature—the Void—so all exists in *Brahman*.

The world is the manifestation of the mind-principle. The mind-principle is *Brahman*, the Creator. When It looks outward, It creates the world and perceives it; when It turns within It sees *Atman* and resolves into its cause.

O King, live, think, see, feel *Atman* and you will have eternal Bliss and Peace.' "

HOLY VASISHTHA SAID :

" The King having offered his hut to Kumbha that he might stay with him, the Muni talked for three hours of the truth that *Atman* is free from actions and attributes. The sun declined in the West and they got up and walked to a neighbouring pond which was rich in water-lilies and lotuses. Both performed their ablutions, offered the eight evening prayers and said the *Gayatri*.¹ They then entered a beautiful

¹ *Gayatri* : The great prayer from the *Rig-Veda*, known as " the Mother of the Vedas."

forest, the trees of which were lit by the light of the declining sun. They walked through the holy places, the beautiful woods and barren fields, their minds fixed in equilibrium, each neither pleased nor displeased with the other.

The object of Kumbha Muni in taking the King through these different places was to see whether any of them produced joy or sorrow in his mind. They walked together through groves, valleys, the gardens of the *devas*, and forests inhabited by lions, wolves and other dangerous beasts and reptiles. They came to a large cave in a mountain and meditated therein. The King and his wife (still disguised as Kumbha Muni) became intimate friends. They bathed in the same springs, said the same *Gayatri* together, and worshipped the same Incarnation of the Lord. Without any desire to serve each other, they showered acts of kindness on one another. Sometimes they put on robes of the *devas*, and walked like the celestials, at other times they slept on banana leaves, on a bed made of flowers, and often on hard stones, without any joy or suffering, fixed in the contemplation of *Atman* and creating light through their minds.

The Queen said to her husband: 'O King, now I am going to heaven. The creation was produced by *Brahma* on the first day of the month of Chaitra, and the *devas* hold a feast in heaven on that day which is also attended by the sage Narada.' But I will come back to-day and you should remain in deep meditation until

then. Should you however return to the sense-consciousness, please concentrate on this bunch of flowers which I have collected for you.'

She handed him as a token of joy the flowers which, in heaven, a wife presents to her husband.

The Queen flew into the sky, and the King watched her ascend like a peacock gazing at a cloud. When she was about to disappear into the blue, like a flash of lightning in a cloud, she took from her neck a garland of flowers, and threw them down on the King below.

She entered her apartments in the royal palace as Queen Chudala and held a Council of State. She heard the reports of the ministers on the affairs of the nation, and gave them instructions. She further gave audience to the chief representatives of her people and, being satisfied that all was well with the State, she became Brahmachari Kumbha again and, crossing the range of clouds, appeared before the King.

The Queen, being satisfied that the King was at last a god-realised man fully rooted in the knowledge of the Absolute, having crossed the sea of illusion and phenomena, revealed herself to him as Chudala, and explained to him how she had appeared as Kumbha to teach him.

The King went into *Samadhi* and in his intuitive experience verified the statement of the Queen. He then said: 'O *devi*, O peerless *yogini*, O *Mahamani*,¹ O my *Guru*, how can I

¹ *Mahamani*: "O Great Mother."

THE STORY OF QUEEN CHUDALA

show my gratitude to you? What great trouble you have taken to teach me! You have carried me across the ocean of Being and Becoming. When a man acquires a pure, wise and devoted woman as his companion, he speedily realises God. I know this well.'

The Queen replied that she had done nothing wonderful. She had only done her duty in liberating him from the self-created fetters of ignorance. She asked the King whether he saw any difference between the life of a ruler and that of a hermit.

The King replied: 'By your grace, holy *Guru*, I have known *Atman* and it is the same to me whether I live in a forest as a hermit or in a palace as a king.'

He fell at the feet of the Queen and washed them with tears of gratitude. He said: 'I am attributeless like space, I am pure like the Himalayan snow. I am all. Even what I called mind or *maya* is no other than my *Atman*. I am Peace Absolute.'

Then, as the Queen asked him what he desired to do further, the King replied, saying: 'I have no desire, there is nothing to acquire and nothing to give up. But I will obey you, my *Guru*; from now on my life is at your service.'

The Queen called him *Vishnu*, and congratulated him.

The following morning they meditated and said the *Gayatri* together for the good of the world. The Queen, as his *guru*, suggested that he should return to the kingdom, as in

then. Should you however return to the sense-consciousness, please concentrate on this bunch of flowers which I have collected for you.'

She handed him as a token of joy the flowers which, in heaven, a wife presents to her husband.

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The King went into *Samadhi* and in his intuitive experience verified the statement of the Queen. He then said: 'O *devi*, O peerless *yogini*, O *Mahamani*,¹ O my *Guru*, how can I

¹ *Mahamani*: "O Great Mother."

show my gratitude to you? What great trouble you have taken to teach me! You have carried me across the ocean of Being and Becoming. When a man acquires a pure, wise and devoted woman as his companion, he speedily realises God. I know this well.'

The Queen replied that she had done nothing wonderful. She had only done her duty in liberating him from the self-created fetters of ignorance. She asked the King whether he saw any difference between the life of a ruler and that of a hermit.

The King replied: 'By your grace, holy *Guru*, I have known *Atman* and it is the same to me whether I live in a forest as a hermit or in a palace as a king.'

He fell at the feet of the Queen and washed them with tears of gratitude. He said: 'I am attributeless like space, I am pure like the Himalayan snow. I am all. Even what I called mind or *maya* is no other than my *Atman*. I am Peace Absolute.'

Then, as the Queen asked him what he desired to do further, the King replied, saying: 'I have no desire, there is nothing to acquire and nothing to give up. But I will obey you, my *Guru*; from now on my life is at your service.'

The Queen called him *Vishnu*, and congratulated him.

The following morning they meditated and said the *Gayatri* together for the good of the world. The Queen, as his *guru*, suggested that he should return to the kingdom, as in

the eyes of a true yogi, a forest and a kingdom are the same.

The King followed her advice and once more occupied the throne. He governed wisely and his rule was perfect, and he and Chudala ruled for one thousand years. There were no wars, no famines, no pestilences during the period, and knowers of *Brahman* sprang up in the Empire."

VASISHTHA SAID :

"O Rama-ji, when their *prarabdha karma*¹ wore out, both Shikhidhwaja and Chudala left their bodies and found final absorption in *Brahman*.

What happened to them, may it be your fate also ! "

OM

¹ *Prarabdha-karma* : That part of the past *karma* which is due to fructify in the present incarnation.